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Dr. Dorothy Penn  
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And other sheep I have, that are  
not of this fold: them also I must  
bring, and they shall hear my  
voice and there shall be one  
fold and one shepherd  
John 10, 16

Congratulations, dear Miss Pur  
on your special election to  
the fold of the Master.

Very cordially yours,  
Sister Mary Berchman

May 30, 1938





# INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE

by

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

*In a new Translation*

by

ALLAN ROSS

*Priest of the London Oratory*

*With an Introduction by the Same*

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LONDON

Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd.

Publishers to the Holy See

126357

<i>First printed</i>	-	-	-	-	1924
<i>Second Impression</i>	-	-	-	-	1930
<i>Third Impression</i>	-	-	-	-	1934
<i>Fourth Impression</i>	(crown 8vo.)	-	-	-	1937

NIHIL OBSTAT:  
INNOCENTIUS APAP. O.P.,  
*Censor deputatus.*

IMPRIMATUR:  
EDM. CAN. SURMONT,  
*Vicarius generalis.*

WESTMONASTERII,  
*die 20 Novembris, 1924.*

LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS  
 SAINT MARY COLLEGE  
 LIBRARY

B X  
 2179  
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 I 54  
 1937

Printed by offset in Great Britain by  
Billing and Sons Ltd., Guildford and Esher



## INTRODUCTION

### I: THE BOOK

**S**T FRANCIS DE SALES was born at the Château de Sales in the parish of Thorens, a few miles from Annecy, on August 21, 1567. He was of noble lineage and the eldest child of his parents, who were both devout Catholics. When seven years of age, he was sent for two years to the college of La Roche, a few miles from the Château de Sales; and, at the age of nine, to a college at Annecy, where he spent four years. In the year 1581 he went to Paris, one of the great centres of learning at that time, and there he remained till 1588, prosecuting his studies. His father's object in sending him to Paris was to give him an education which might fit him for a brilliant career in the world; but this did not satisfy the aspirations of Francis, who, in addition to rhetoric and philosophy, threw himself with ardour into the study of theology and Scripture. In later years he used to say: "I studied many subjects, when I was at Paris, to please my father; but I studied theology to please myself." From Paris, he went to the university of Padua, where he spent three years, taking his degree in canon and civil law with the most brilliant success in the autumn of 1591. This finished the student life of Francis, who was just twenty-four years of age. In these seventeen years of unceasing study were laid the foundations of the eminent science of a future Doctor of the Church, and also the foundations of the heroic sanctity of one of her most attractive saints.

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Francis had already resolved in his heart to become a priest, but it was necessary first to overcome the opposition of his father, who had more worldly ambitions for his brilliant son. This he succeeded in doing, and on December 18, 1593, he was ordained priest, saying his first Mass in the Cathedral at Annecy on December 21. For a year he worked in Annecy, and then came one of the great works of his life, the conversion of the Chablais, which occupied him from the autumn of 1594 till the end of 1598. Scarcely had he brought this mission to a successful close, when he was appointed coadjutor to the aged Bishop of Geneva, Mgr. Claude de Granier, with right of succession; but he would not receive episcopal consecration until the time of his actual succession.

In January, 1602, Francis went to Paris, in order to negotiate certain matters connected with the diocese of Geneva. Affairs moved slowly, and he was obliged to spend about eight months there, which he turned to good account. He preached the Lent at court, and the King (Henry IV) conceived a great admiration for him; he was brought into contact with many saintly souls, and it was during this period that his exceptional powers as a spiritual guide began to manifest themselves. In fact, this visit to Paris may be said to be the dividing line between the first part of his life and the second, for it was from this date that he began what was to be the chief work of his life and the most far-reaching, the direction of souls; though this work did not obtain full expansion till two years later, when he met St Jane Frances de Chantal at Dijon.

The Bishop of Geneva died on September 17, 1602, and Francis, who succeeded him, was consecrated bishop on December 8, 1602. The first year of his life as a bishop was spent in regulating the affairs of his diocese. Towards the end of the year he was invited to preach the following Lent at Dijon, and his acceptance of this invitation proved to be an event of



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outstanding importance in his life; for there he met for the first time Madame de Chantal, between whom and himself there sprang up a friendship which was destined to have a profound influence upon the lives of both. From this date commence in real earnest his letters of direction, not only to her, but to very many others who sought his counsel—letters which are full of spiritual wisdom, and which apply the principles of the devout life to varying characters and circumstances. The letters of St Francis fill eleven volumes\* of the great Annecy edition of his works, which is now nearing completion, the final volume of letters having been published a few months ago. These eleven volumes contain over 2,000 letters, some of them of great length; and when we reflect that they form but a portion† of the entire correspondence, it is difficult to imagine how the saint ever found time to write them. But they stand as a monument to his unwearied labours and to his wonderful love of souls. The most interesting part of this immense correspondence, and that which is of the most permanent value, deals with the direction of souls; and this part of the saint's work, as has been said, commenced in real earnest in the year 1604 after his meeting with Madame de Chantal. In the letters of direction of this period we find the first expression of the ideas of St Francis upon Christian piety—ideas which afterwards found more methodical expression in his formal works, especially in the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. But by the year 1604 the formation of St Francis was complete, and he was ripe for his great work as an unrivalled director of souls. Henceforth his relations with numerous persons in every class of life drew out his powers of direction, and the experience which he gained thereby helped him to compose his masterpieces of spiritu-

\* Vols. xi to xxi.

† "Si volumineuse que soit cette collection, elle ne représente pas la dixième partie de la correspondance entière" (*Oeuvres*, vol. xxi. p. v).

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ality, the *Introduction to the Devout Life* and the *Treatise on the Love of God*. St Francis died on December 28, 1622, and was canonized in 1665. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1877.

The *Introduction to the Devout Life* was finished and despatched to the publisher in August, 1608, but it did not actually appear till the end of 1608, or the beginning of 1609. It is not correct to say, as is sometimes said, that the book was drawn up by St Francis chiefly from letters which he had written to one of his penitents, Madame de Charmoisy. The saint had no spiritual relations with this lady till the Lent of 1607, when she came to Annecy; and the first mention of her in his letters is to be found in a letter to St Jane Chantal written from Annecy on April 5, 1607: "I have just found in our sacred nets a fish which I had so longed for these four years. It is a lady all of gold, and magnificently fitted to serve her Saviour; and if she persevere she will do so with fruit." Madame de Charmoisy spent the Lent of 1607 at Annecy, and St Francis, after carefully instructing her in the spiritual life, gave her some records of these instructions in writing, as he explains in the Preface of the *Introduction*. These were subsequently incorporated in the book, which is a carefully compiled treatise on the spiritual life for persons living in the world, and not a mere collection of spiritual letters written haphazard and put together in book form. It would take too long to set out all the arguments, but there is plenty of evidence in the letters of the saint to show that, as early as 1602, he had begun to write treatises on various points of the spiritual life which he used to keep by him and lend to different persons according to their needs. Thus in the year 1605 we find him writing to the abbess of Puits d'Orbe as follows: "If I had my papers here, I would send you a treatise on this subject,\* which I made at Paris for a spiritual daughter," etc. This shows that even

\* Peace of soul.

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in the year 1602 (the year in which he was at Paris) he had begun to write these little treatises, and there are other references to such writings, in the letters which he wrote prior to undertaking the direction of Madame de Charmois.

The fact is that, as soon as the saint began the work of directing souls in the world, he realized the need of some book for their guidance. He writes in the Preface to the *Introduction* : " Those who have treated of devotion have almost all had in mind the instruction of persons very much withdrawn from the society of the world, or at all events they have taught a kind of devotion which leads to this complete withdrawal;" and then he goes on to point out that his intention is to write for those living in the world, and to show them how to attain to perfection without withdrawing from the world. It is, therefore, only reasonable to suppose that he must for a long time have considered the idea of writing such a book himself. The little treatises which he wrote on various points of the spiritual life may be regarded as tentative efforts in that direction, which would eventually form a complete book on the spiritual life for those living in the world.

If we may hazard a conjecture, perhaps the saint forbore from writing anything systematic before the year 1607, because he was waiting for his ideal *Philothea*, someone living in the world in whom he might see his ideas on the devout life fulfilled; which would explain why he did not consider Madame de Chantal to be an ideal *Philothea*. He knew from the very beginning that God had other designs for her, and so he waited until an ideal *Philothea* presented herself in the person of Madame de Charmois. She had married a relative of his, and he had known her for some years before she put herself under his direction. He realized that, if she would give herself generously to the practice of the devout life, she would make an ideal *Philothea*, just such a one as he had

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been seeking; and this explains his words to Madame de Chantal in April, 1607: "I have just found in our sacred nets a fish which I had so longed for these four years. It is a lady all of gold, and magnificently fitted to serve her Saviour; and if she persevere she will do so with fruit." And so, as he tells us himself, he "took great trouble to instruct her carefully and conducted her through all the exercises which were suited to her desire and to her condition of life," and "left her some records of them in writing." It required but a word from such an excellent judge as Père Fourier (to whom she showed them) to confirm his own judgement, that in these writings he had set forth the substance of a book which would be of real profit to those living in the world. Père Fourier wrote to St Francis on March 25, 1608, urging the publication of these writings: "How shall we act in order to publish Madame de Charmois's treasure of devotion? Before doing so it is necessary, in my opinion, to revise the whole, arrange it in proper order, give it a title, and write a preface for it with the author's name, so that its utility may be more assured and more universal." It is clear from Père Fourier's words that the writings in question were not a collection of letters written haphazard, but a series of instructions on the spiritual life so valuable as to form a "treasure of devotion," and so carefully drawn up that they needed only a little revision and some additional matter to make a complete treatise on devotion. Hence, notwithstanding his scanty leisure, St Francis was able in four months to have the book ready for publication.

It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that St Francis, in publishing *La Vie Dévote*, had the intention of compiling a methodical and complete treatise on devotion for persons living in the world. This is confirmed by the first edition of the book, which may be called a preliminary essay in the kind of book that was needed. The saint intended from the first



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to revise it and add to it such things as his experience showed him to be useful, in order that it might be as complete as possible; and so we find, in the Preface to the first edition, the following words to the reader, which were omitted in subsequent editions: "If this essay meets with thy approval, thou wilt see what is wanting to it at my first leisure."\*

The saint carried out this promise, and the second edition of the book appeared within a year of the first. This second edition differs considerably from the first, which consisted of only three parts. The saint rearranged the chapters, and added others to make it more complete. He explained what he had done in a short *Notice to the Reader*, in which he writes: "Dear Reader, the second edition presents my little book to you corrected and augmented by several chapters and noteworthy things." In 1610 he issued a third edition, to which he prefixed a fresh *Notice*, which appears in this new translation. A fourth edition appeared in 1619. This must be considered the definitive edition, for it was the last published under the saint's revision, and is the one reproduced in the critical edition of the works of St Francis now nearing completion, of which *Introduction à la Vie Dévote* forms Volume III, published in 1893. It is from this text that the translation here given has been made.

There is no need to dwell upon the merits of the book. From the time of its publication up to the present day, it has been recognized as a spiritual masterpiece, and its teaching is as fresh and as applicable to-day as it was when it came from the pen of its author. The acclamation with which it was received on its first appearance has, if anything, been accentuated during the centuries which have elapsed since its author died, and it will be sufficient to quote the words of our present Holy Father,

\* Si cet essay t'agrée, tu verras ce qui y manque à mon premier loisir.

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Pius XI, to show its value: "Would that this book, the most perfect of its kind in the judgement of his contemporaries, as at one time it was in the hands of all, were now also read by all; so that then Christian piety might everywhere flourish again, and the Church of God might rejoice in seeing sanctity common among her children."\*

## II: ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

The first English translation was published in 1613, under the following title: *An Introduction to a Devout Life. Composed in Frenche by the R. Father in God, Francis Sales, Bishop of Geneva, and translated into English by J.Y., Rouen, Hamilton, 1613.* Dom Benedict Mackey, O.S.B., attributes this translation to an English Benedictine monk named John Yaworth.† It is not so much a translation as a very free paraphrase, in which the translator constantly makes interpolations of his own, which sometimes amount to entire sentences.

The next English translation is by an anonymous translator and was published in 1675 under the following title: *An Introduction to a Devout Life. By Francis Sales, Bishop and Prince of Geneva. Printed by T.D. in the year 1675.* The translator contributes a short Preface from which I take the following: "It has been formerly translated by a revered person of our country: but he in his great humility exposing it to the reviewing of others, it fell into the hands of some, who, enlarging the author's style by many unnecessary paraphrases, have in divers places confounded his sense, and made the book less portable. In this edition we hope we have remedied both these inconveniences. The first by following the true sense of the author, and his own

\* Encyclical letter of January 26, 1923, on the third centenary of the death of St Francis de Sales.

† *Oeuvres de S. François de Sales*, vol. iii, p. xxiv.

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expressions, as near to the life, as the two languages will meet. The second by printing it in somewhat a less character than formerly." The translator has certainly fulfilled his promise of "following the true sense of the author" more closely than J. Y., and his translation is interesting, because it may be said to be the basis of all subsequent translations up to the nineteenth century, including that of Challoner. I have also before me a later edition of this translation, in which considerable verbal alterations have been made, and of which the title runs as follows: *An Introduction to the Devout Life, written originally in French by St Francis de Sales, Bishop and Prince of Geneva. Faithfully rendered into English. Printed by T. Meighan, in Drury Lane. MDCCXLI.*

Challoner's translation, the first edition of which appeared in 1762 (Needham, London), is the most important English translation, because, more than any other, it has come to be the accepted one for English Catholics. I have a copy of the second edition before me, the title of which runs as follows: *Philothea, or an Introduction to a Devout Life, by St Francis de Sales. Newly translated into English, from the original French, according to the last Edition, revised and corrected by the Saint himself, a little before his Death. By R. C. Printed for J. P. Coghlan, in Duke Street, Grosvenor Square. MDCCLXX.* A comparison of this translation with the anonymous translation of 1675 shows that the former is based upon the latter, or rather upon the later edition published by Thomas Meighan in 1741. Challoner has revised it throughout, in order to make it conform more closely to the French, so that it may be called a fresh translation, but the dependence of the one upon the other is obvious to anyone who will compare them together. Challoner's translation, which is more accurate than any of its predecessors, has nevertheless many defects. Many of the words used in it are obsolete, or have quite a different meaning nowa-

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days, as, for example, in the following passage :\*  
“ Alcmaeon pretended that goats breathe by the ears,” etc., where the word ‘pretend’ has the meaning of ‘maintain.’ Moreover, the translation is often faulty, as, for example, at the end of the seventh chapter of the second part, where Challoner translates : “ Or, cela se fait sur le lieu même auquel nous avons fait la méditation, en nous y entretenant, ou promenant solitairement quelque temps après,” by : “ Now this is to be done in the same place where we have been making our meditation, by entertaining ourselves on the subject, or walking by ourselves for some time afterwards.” It would require a very careful revision throughout, to correct such inaccuracies, and, moreover, the style of the translation is not of sufficient merit to warrant such an undertaking. The following passage† is a not unfair example of the style: “ After going out from this prayer of the heart, take heed that you give not your heart a jog, lest you spill the precious balm you have received by means of your prayer: my meaning is, that you must for some little time, if possible, keep yourself in silence, and gently remove your heart from your prayer to your other employments; retaining so long as you are able the feelings and affections you have conceived. A man that has received some precious liquor in a fair china dish, to carry it to his house, will go softly, not looking aside, but sometimes before him, for fear of stumbling or making a wrong step, sometimes upon his dish, for fear of spilling the liquor: even so ought you to do; when you go out from your meditation, distract not yourself immediately, but look only before you; as much as to say, if you must meet with anyone, whom you are obliged to entertain, or to hear, there is no remedy, you must accommodate yourself to that, yet in such a manner as to have regard also to your heart, that as little as possible of the liquor of holy prayer may be

\* Part III, Chap. 21.

† Part II, Chap. 8.

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spilt on that occasion." This is stiff and awkward, and has lost the smooth and easy flow of the French.

A more accurate and more modern translation having long been needed, an attempt was made to supply this need some years ago, when a new translation, edited by the Very Rev. W. J. B. Richards, D.D., was published by Burns and Oates. The translator's name is not given, nor the date, but, as it bears the *imprimatur* of Cardinal Manning, it must have been published between 1875 and 1892. This may be called the current translation for English Catholics, since it is the one most widely used by them at the present day. Not only is it far too free a translation, but it has many grave errors, which make it quite unreliable as an expression of the teaching of St Francis de Sales.

There is another modern translation by the Rev. Thomas Barns, M.A. (Oxon.), published by Methuen and Co. in 1906. This translation is pleasing from the literary standpoint, but unreliable as a translation. The translation is by a clergyman of the Church of England, and traces of its non-Catholic provenance are apparent throughout, especially in the rendering of the passages from Holy Scripture. Nor is the translator always accurate in his renderings, as, for example, in the fifth chapter of the first part, where he translates "Ce n'est pas leur consentir que d'en être incommodé" by "It is not in consenting to them only that we are hard put to it." Moreover, his want of knowledge of Catholic theology and Catholic terms leads him sometimes into serious mistakes, as, for example, in the sixth chapter of the first part. And, finally, he even goes so far as sometimes to allow his own views to colour his interpretation of the text, as in the fourteenth chapter of the second part, where the following words occur: "Protestez de vouloir vivre et mourir en la foi et obeissance de sa sainte parole, et en l'union de la sainte Église catholique." The translator leaves out



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the very important words "en l'union de," and translates as follows: "Declare that you wish to live and die in the faith and obedience of the Holy Catholic Church."

I think it will be admitted that there is real need of a more adequate translation of *La Vie Dévote* than has hitherto been made; and the present time seems especially opportune for attempting to supply the need seeing that the Holy Father has so strongly recommended this spiritual masterpiece in his encyclical letter; quoted above.

This translation is an attempt to supply the need. I have endeavoured to give an accurate translation, and, at the same time, while conforming as closely as possible to the original, to present the author's meaning in good modern English, though I have tried to give it a somewhat archaic flavour, as being more in harmony with the original. Only on one occasion have I deliberately departed from a faithful rendering of the author's words, and this is in the translation of the following words, which are to be found in the sixteenth chapter of the second part: "Elle est Mère de notre souverain Père, et par consequent notre grand'mère." These words may sound well enough in French, but if translated literally into English might provoke a smile. And yet the saint's meaning is clear, and I think that I have given that meaning in the English words which I have employed. I have, in making this translation, availed myself of the help supplied by older translations, especially that of 1675 (in the edition of 1741) and Challoner's, but my own translation differs so much from them throughout that it may be called an independent translation.

I am conscious of the shortcomings of this translation, but I can only say that I have done my best to supply the need that there is of a good translation of *La Vie Dévote* in a style less unworthy of its great original than that of those which have hitherto been

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published. It is very difficult to do justice to the original, and this must be my plea for the insufficiencies of this translation; but if it helps, though but a little, towards the fulfilment of the Holy Father's wish that the *Introduction to the Devout Life* should be in the hands of all Catholics, I shall be amply rewarded for the labour it has cost me.

ALLAN ROSS.

THE ORATORY,  
LONDON,  
August 21, 1924.



## TABLE OF DATES

A.D.

1567. Francis is born at the Château de Sales on August 21.
1581. Goes to Paris to study Rhetoric and Philosophy.
1588. Goes to Padua to study Law.
1593. Is ordained priest at Annecy on December 18.
1594. (September) Begins the task of converting the Chablais.
1599. Is appointed coadjutor to the Bishop of Geneva.
1602. Spends eight months in Paris.  
On his return is consecrated bishop at Thorens on December 8.
1604. Preaches the Lent at Dijon.
1608. Composes the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, which is published about the end of 1608 or beginning of 1609.
1609. Second edition of the *Introduction*.
1610. Founds (together with St Jane Frances de Chantal) the Visitation Order.  
Third edition of the *Introduction*.
1616. Fourth edition of the *Introduction*.
1619. Fifth edition of the *Introduction*.
1622. Dies at Lyons on December 28.



## DEDICATORY PRAYER

**O** SWEET Jesus, my Lord, my Saviour and my God, behold me prostrate before thy Majesty, dedicating and consecrating this work to thy glory. Quicken the words, which it contains, with thy blessing, so that the souls, for whom I have written it, may receive from it the holy inspirations which I desire for them, and especially that of imploring thy boundless mercy on my behalf, so that, whilst showing to others the way of devotion in this world, *I become not a cast-away*,\* and be not confounded eternally in the next; but that I may sing for ever with them, as a hymn of triumph, the words which I utter with my whole heart in witness of my fidelity amid the hazards of this mortal life: *Vive Jesus! Vive Jesus!* Yea, Lord Jesus, live and reign in our hearts for ever and ever. Amen.

\* 1 Cor. ix 27.







## NOTICE TO THE READER

(THIRD EDITION, 1610)

**T**HIS little book left my hands in the year 1608. In its second edition, it was augmented by several chapters, but three of those which were in the first, were by an oversight omitted. Since then, it has often been printed without my knowledge, and, with each fresh issue, mistakes have been multiplied. Here it is corrected anew, and with all the chapters, but without foot-notes, because the learned have no need of them, and the others do not care about them. When I make use of the words of Scripture, it is not always to explain them, but to explain myself by them, since they are more worthy of love and veneration. If God hears my prayer, thou wilt receive great profit from this book and many blessings.





## THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

**M**Y dear Reader, pray read this Preface for thy satisfaction and for mine.

The flower-girl Glycera was so skilful in arranging her flowers, that, with the same flowers, she made a great variety of nosegays; so that the painter Pausias, when he strove to emulate her skill, fell short of it, for he was not able to vary the composition of his pictures in so many ways as Glycera was able to vary her nosegays. In like manner the Holy Ghost disposes and arranges the teachings of devotion, which he gives by the tongues and pens of his servants, with so great a variety, that, though the doctrine is always one and the same, yet the discourses in which they deliver it, are very different, according to the divers ways in which they are composed. I am not able indeed, neither do I wish, nor ought I to write in this *Introduction* anything which has not been already published on the subject by our predecessors; they are the same flowers that I present to thee, my Reader, but the nosegay which I have made of them will be different from theirs, because it is arranged in a different manner.

Those who have treated of devotion have almost all had in mind the instruction of persons very much withdrawn from the society of the world, or at all events they have taught a kind of devotion which leads to this complete withdrawal. My intention is to instruct those who live in towns, in households, at the court, and who, by reason of their circumstances, are obliged to lead an ordinary life in outward show; who very often, under colour of an alleged impossibility, are not willing even to think of undertaking

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the devout life, because they are of the opinion that, just as no beast dare taste of the herb called *palma Christi*, so no one ought to aspire to the palm of Christian piety, while living in the midst of the press of worldly occupations. And I show them that, as the mother pearls live in the sea without taking one drop of salt water, and as towards the Chelidonian isles there are springs of perfectly fresh water in the midst of the sea, and as the flies called *pirastes* fly in the flames without burning their wings, so a vigorous and constant soul can live in the world without receiving any worldly taint, can find springs of sweet piety in the midst of the briny waters of the world, and can fly among the flames of earthly concupiscences without burning the wings of the holy desires of the devout life. It is true that this is not an easy task, and for this reason I should like many to undertake it with more zeal than has been shown up to the present; and therefore, wholly weak though I be, I am endeavouring by means of this book to contribute some help of my own to those who, with a generous heart, are willing to undertake this worthy enterprise.

And yet it is not altogether by my own choice or inclination that this *Introduction* is published. A soul, full of honour and virtue, having some good while since received from God the grace to aspire to the devout life, requested my assistance in the matter; and I, being in many ways under an obligation to her, and having long before noted in her a singularly good disposition for this design, took great trouble to instruct her carefully, and, having conducted her through all the exercises which were suited to her desire and to her condition of life, I left her some records of them in writing, so that she might have recourse to them according to her need. She subsequently showed them to a great, learned and devout Religious,\* who, being of the opinion that many others would derive great profit from them,

\* Père Fourier, S.J.

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earnestly exhorted me to publish them: and it was an easy matter for him to win my consent, because his friendship had a great influence upon my will, and his judgement had great weight with mine.

Now, that the whole may be more useful and acceptable, I have revised it and reduced it to some sort of order, adding thereto many counsels and instructions proper to my purpose. But I have had to do all this with scarcely any leisure at all; and therefore thou wilt find herein nothing very exhaustively treated, but only a collection of sincere admonitions, which I explain in clear and intelligible words: leastwise I have desired so to do. But as regards elegance of style, I have not given a thought to it, having other things enough to do.

I address my words to *Philothea*, because, wishing to apply to the common good of many what I had in the first instance written for one only, I address her by that name which is common to all those who wish to be devout; for *Philothea* means a lover of God.

Therefore, in all this matter having in mind a soul, who, by the desire of devotion, aspires to the love of God, I have divided this *Introduction* into five parts; in the first of which I endeavour by certain counsels and exercises to change the simple desire of *Philothea* into a firm resolution (which she makes at the end, after a general confession), by means of a firm protestation, followed by the most Holy Communion, wherein giving herself up to her Saviour, and receiving him, she enters happily into his holy love. That done, to lead her farther on, I show her two great means of uniting herself more and more with his divine Majesty; the one, the use of the Sacraments, by which our good God comes to us; the other, holy prayer, whereby he draws us to himself; and with this I occupy the second part. In the third, I show her, how she ought to exercise herself in divers virtues more especially proper for her advancement, not delaying but to give her certain particular



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counsels, which she could not easily have got elsewhere, nor have discovered for herself. In the fourth, I make known to her some snares of her enemies, showing her how she may escape them, and go forward. And last of all in the fifth part I make her retire awhile, to refresh herself, to recover breath, and to repair her strength, that she may afterwards more successfully gain ground, and advance in the devout life.

This is a very capricious age, and I foresee clearly that many will say, that it appertains only to Religious and persons of devotion, to direct individual souls along the path of piety; that such a work requires more leisure than a Bishop can well spare, when charged with a diocese so heavy as mine is; that it is too great a distraction to the understanding, which should be employed in affairs of greater importance. But as for me, my dear Reader, I say, with the great St Denis, that it appertains principally to Bishops to lead souls to perfection, since their Order is supreme among men, as is that of the Seraphim among the angels; so that their leisure cannot be better employed than about such business. The ancient Bishops and Fathers of the Church were at least as careful of their charge as we are, yet they failed not for all that to have a care for the individual guidance of many souls who had recourse to their assistance, as appears from their epistlès. And herein they imitated the Apostles themselves, who, in the midst of the general harvest of all the world, gathered notwithstanding with a special and particular affection, certain notable ears of corn. Who knows not that Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Onesimus, St Thecla, and Appia were the dear children of the great St Paul, as St Mark and St Petronilla were of St Peter? St Petronilla, I say, who—as Baronius and Gallonio learnedly prove—was not the actual daughter, but only the spiritual child of St Peter. And does not St John, the beloved disciple of our

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Lord, write one of his canonical epistles to the devout lady named Electa ?

It is a labour, I confess, to undertake the direction of individual souls, but one which brings withal much comfort; like the toil of husbandmen in time of harvest and vintage, who are never better pleased, than when busily engaged and fully occupied; it is a labour which recreates the hearts of those who undertake it, through the abundance of delight which flows from it, as the cinnamon with its sweet odour comforts those who carry it through Arabia Felix. It is said that the tigress, having recovered one of her cubs—which the huntsman leaves in the way, to occupy her while he carries away the rest of the litter—takes it up, however great it may be, and finds herself not a whit the slower, but rather the swifter in the course which she makes to secure it in her den, natural love lightening her with this very load. How much more willingly then will a fatherly heart take upon him the charge of a soul, which he finds possessed of a desire of holy perfection, carrying such a soul in his bosom, as a mother carries her little child, being never weary of carrying the burthen which she loves so entirely. But it must needs be a fatherly heart; and for this reason the Apostles and apostolic men call their disciples not only their children, but with more tender affection their *little children*.

To conclude, my dear Reader, it is true that I write of the devout life, being myself without devotion, yet not without an earnest desire of attaining thereto, and it is this very desire which has given me courage to instruct thee; for as a great and learned man said, it is a good means to become learned for a man to study hard, a better to have a learned master, and the best of all to teach others. And it often comes to pass, says St Augustine writing to his dearest Florentina, that “the office of distributing to others, serves us as a merit to receive,” and the office of teaching becomes a foundation of learning.

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Alexander caused the lovely Campaspe, who was so dear to him, to be painted by the hand of the incomparable Apelles; and Apelles, being forced to gaze much upon Campaspe, whilst he was drawing her features in the picture, imprinted the love of her beauty upon his heart, and became so enamoured of her, that Alexander perceiving it and pitying his case, gave her to him in marriage, depriving himself for his sake, of the dearest love he had: "by which," says Pliny, "he showed the greatness of his heart more plainly than he would have done by a very great victory in battle." Now I am of opinion, my Reader, my friend, that it is the will of God, that, being a Bishop, I should paint upon the hearts of others, not only the ordinary virtues but still more the virtue of devotion, which is most amiable and acceptable in his divine sight; and I undertake the office willingly, as well to obey and perform my duty, as for the hope I have that, while engraving this lovely virtue upon the hearts of others, mine own perhaps may become more holily enamoured thereof. And, if ever his divine Majesty perceive my soul sincerely in love with this beautiful virtue, he will bestow her upon me in an everlasting marriage. The fair and chaste Rebecca, watering the camels of Isaac was destined to be his spouse, and received from him golden earrings and bracelets;\* so do I promise myself through the boundless goodness of my God, that, whilst I am leading his beloved sheep to the wholesome waters of devotion, he will make my soul his spouse, fastening in my ears the golden words of his holy love, and binding on my arms the strength to practise them well, in which lies the essence of true devotion; which I humbly beseech his heavenly Majesty to bestow upon me, and upon all the children of his Church; to which Church I wish always to submit my writings, my actions, my words, my wishes, and my thoughts.

AT ANNESSY, ST MARY MAGDALEN'S DAY, 1609.

\* Gen. xxiv 20-22.



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### FIRST PART

CONTAINING COUNSELS AND EXERCISES REQUISITE FOR  
THE GUIDANCE OF THE SOUL FROM HER FIRST  
DESIRE OF THE DEVOUT LIFE UNTIL SHE BE BROUGHT  
TO A FULL RESOLUTION TO EMBRACE IT

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# THE FIRST PART OF THE INTRODUCTION

CONTAINING COUNSELS AND EXERCISES  
REQUISITE FOR THE GUIDANCE OF  
THE SOUL FROM HER FIRST DESIRE  
OF THE DEVOUT LIFE, UNTIL SHE BE  
BROUGHT TO A FULL RESOLUTION  
TO EMBRACE IT





## CHAPTER I

### DESCRIPTION OF TRUE DEVOTION

**Y**OU aspire to devotion, dearest Philothea, because being a Christian, you know that it is a virtue extremely pleasing to the divine Majesty: but inasmuch as small faults committed in the beginning of any affair, in the progress thereof grow infinitely greater and in the end become almost irreparable, it is necessary before all things that you should know what the virtue of devotion is; for since there is but one true devotion, and very many which are false and vain, if you know not which is the true, you may very easily be deceived, and waste your time in following some devotion which is false and superstitious.

Aurelius was wont to paint all the faces in his pictures to the air and resemblance of the women whom he loved, and each one paints devotion according to his own passion and fancy. He that is given to fasting holds himself for very devout, if he do but fast, though his heart be full of rancour: and though he dare not moisten his tongue in wine or even in water for fear of transgressing sobriety, yet he scruples not to plunge it in the blood of his neighbour, by detraction and calumny. Another will account himself devout, for reciting a great multitude of prayers every day, although afterwards he gives his tongue full liberty to utter peevish, arrogant and injurious words among his familiars and neighbours. Another will readily draw an alms out of his purse to give it to the poor, but he cannot draw any gentleness out of his heart to forgive his enemies. Another will forgive his enemies, but will not make

satisfaction to his creditors, unless forced by the law to do so. And yet all these persons are, in the common estimation, held to be devout, though they are by no means so. The servants of Saul sought for David in his house; but Michol having laid a statue in his bed, and having covered it with David's apparel, made them believe that it was David himself sick and sleeping:\* even so do many persons cover themselves with certain external actions belonging to holy devotion, and the world believes them to be truly devout and spiritual; whereas in reality they are but statues and phantoms of devotion.

True and living devotion, O Philothea, presupposes the love of God; nay rather it is no other thing than a true love of God; yet not any kind of love; for, in so far as divine love beautifies our souls, and makes us pleasing to his divine Majesty, it is called grace; in so far as it gives us strength to do good, it is called charity; but when it reaches such a degree of perfection, that it makes us not only do good, but do so carefully, frequently and readily, then it is called devotion. Ostriches never fly; fowls fly, but heavily, low down and seldom; but eagles, doves, and swallows fly often, swiftly and on high. In like manner sinners fly not towards God, but make all their courses on the earth and for the things of the earth; good persons, who have not yet reached devotion, fly towards God by their good deeds, but rarely, slowly and heavily; devout persons fly towards God, frequently, readily and on high. In short, devotion is no other thing than a spiritual nimbleness and vivacity, by means of which charity works in us, or we by her, readily and heartily; and as it is the office of charity to make us observe all the commandments of God generally and universally, so it is the office of devotion to make us observe them readily and diligently. Hence it is that he who keeps not all the commandments of God, cannot be esteemed either

\* 1 Kings xix 11-16.

good or devout, since to be good one must have charity, and to be devout one must have, besides charity, a great alacrity and readiness in carrying out the actions prompted by charity.

And since devotion consists in a certain excelling degree of charity, it not only makes us ready, active and diligent in observing all the commandments of God; but it also prompts us to do readily and heartily as many good works as we can, even though they be not in any sort commanded, but only counselled or inspired. For just as a man but newly recovered from some sickness, walks only so much as is needful, and but slowly and heavily, in like manner the sinner, when newly healed of his iniquity, walks in so far as God commands him, but heavily and slowly, until he attains to devotion; for then like a man in sound health he not only walks, but runs and leaps *in the way of God's commandments*,\* and moreover passes onwards and runs in the paths of the heavenly counsels and inspirations. In fine, charity and devotion differ no more, the one from the other, than the flame from the fire; inasmuch as charity, being a spiritual fire, when it breaks out into flame, is called devotion: so that devotion adds nothing to the fire of charity, save the flame which makes charity ready, active and diligent, not only in observing the commandments of God, but in practising the heavenly counsels and inspirations.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCE OF DEVOTION

THOSE who discouraged the Israelites from going into the promised land, told them that it was a country which *devoured its inhabitants*;† that is to say, that the climate was so unhealthy that it was

\* Ps. cxviii 32.

† Num. xiii 33, 34.

impossible to live there long, and that the inhabitants were such monsters that they ate up other men like locusts. So the world, my dear Philothea, defames holy devotion as much as ever it can, depicting devout persons with peevish, sad and sullen countenances, and proclaiming that devotion produces tempers which are melancholy and insupportable. But as Josue and Caleb protested that not only was the promised land good and fair to behold, but also that the possession thereof would be sweet and agreeable, so doth the Holy Spirit assure us by the mouth of all the Saints, and our Saviour\* by his own, that the devout life is a sweet, happy and agreeable life.

The world sees that devout persons fast, pray, and bear injuries patiently, that they serve the sick, give to the poor, watch, bridle their anger, repress and stifle their passions, deprive themselves of sensual pleasures, and do such actions and other kinds of actions which in themselves are hard and rigorous; but the world does not see the interior and cordial devotion which renders all these actions agreeable, sweet and easy. Look at the bees upon the thyme; they find there a very bitter juice, but in sucking it, they convert it into honey, because it belongs to their nature to do so. O worldlings! devout souls find much bitterness, it is true, in their exercises of mortification; but in doing them they convert them into sweetness and delight. The fires, the flames, the wheels, and the swords seemed flowers and perfumes to the martyrs because they were devout. If, then, devotion can give sweetness to the most cruel torments and even to death itself, what will it do for the actions of virtue?

Sugar sweetens unripe fruits, and corrects the rawness and unwholesomeness of those which are fully ripe. Now devotion is the true spiritual sugar which takes away what is bitter in mortification and

\* Matt. xi 28-30.



what may be hurtful in consolation: it takes away discontent from the poor, and anxiety from the rich, desolation from the oppressed and insolence from the favoured, sadness from the solitary and dissipation from him that is in company. It serves for fire in winter and for dew in summer; it knows how to abound and how to suffer need; it renders equally profitable honour and contempt; it receives pleasure and pain with a heart almost always the same, and fills us with a wonderful delight.

Contemplate the ladder of Jacob,\* for it is a true picture of the devout life. The two sides between which one ascends, and to which the rungs are fastened, represent prayer which obtains the love of God and the sacraments which confer it; the rungs represent the divers degrees of charity by which one goes from virtue to virtue, either descending by action to the succour and support of one's neighbour, or ascending by contemplation to loving union with God. Now look, I beseech you, at those who are on the ladder; they are men who have angelic hearts, or angels who have human bodies; they are not young, though they seem to be so, because they are full of vigour and spiritual agility; they have wings to fly, and they soar up towards God by holy prayer, but they have also feet to walk with men by a holy and amiable intercourse with them; their faces are beautiful and cheerful, because they receive all things with sweetness and delight; their legs, their arms, and their heads are uncovered, because their thoughts, their affections, and their actions have no other design or motive than to please God. The rest of their body is covered, but with a beautiful and light robe, because they do indeed make use of this world and of worldly things, but in a fashion which is altogether pure and sincere, since they only take but sparingly that which is requisite for their condition of life. Such are the devout.

\* Gen. xxviii 12.

Believe me, dear Philothea, devotion is the sweetest of all sweet things and the queen of virtues, because it is the perfection of charity. If charity be a milk, devotion is its cream; if it be a plant, devotion is its flower; if it be a precious stone, devotion is its lustre; if it be a precious balm, devotion is its perfume, yea the odour of sweetness which comforts men and makes the angels rejoice.

## CHAPTER III

THAT DEVOTION IS SUITED TO ALL  
VOCATIONS AND PROFESSIONS

IN the creation God commanded the plants to bring forth their fruit, each after its kind:\* even so he commands Christians, who are the living plants of his Church, to bring forth fruits of devotion, each one according to his kind and vocation. Devotion ought to be practised differently by the gentleman, by the artisan, by the servant, by the prince, by the widow, by the daughter, by the wife; and not only so, but the practice of devotion must be accommodated to the strength, to the affairs, and to the duties of each one individually. I ask you, Philothea, would it be proper for a bishop to wish to be solitary like the Carthusians? And if the married were to have no wish to lay by more than the Capuchins, and the artisan were to be in church all day like the religious, and the religious were to be always exposed to all sorts of interruptions for the service of his neighbour like the bishop, would not such devotion be ridiculous, disorderly, and intolerable? Nevertheless, this fault is very common; and the world which cannot or will not distinguish between true devotion and the indiscretion of those who imagine themselves to be devout, murmurs and blames devotion which is not responsible for these disorders.

\* 1 Gen. i 11.

No, Philothea, devotion when it is true never spoils anything, but rather perfects all things, and when it becomes inconsistent with the lawful vocation of anyone, it is without doubt false. "The bee," says Aristotle, "sucks its honey from the flowers without injuring them," and leaves them as whole and as fresh as it found them; but true devotion does even better, for not only does it not spoil any sort of calling or employment, but on the contrary it adorns and beautifies them. Precious stones of all kinds when steeped in honey become more brilliant thereby, each one according to its colour, so every one becomes more agreeable in his vocation by joining it with devotion. The care of a family is rendered peaceable thereby, the love of the husband and of the wife more sincere, the service of the prince more faithful, and every kind of occupation more pleasant and agreeable.

It is an error, nay rather a heresy to wish to banish the devout life from the army, from the workshop, from the courts of princes, from the households of married folk. It is true, Philothea, that devotion of a kind which is purely contemplative, monastic and religious cannot be practised in these callings; but besides these three kinds of devotion, there are also many others, which are suitable for leading to perfection those whose lives are spent in secular avocations. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, David, Job, Tobias, Sara, Rebecca and Judith bear witness thereof for the Old Testament; and as for the New, St Joseph, Lydia and St Crispin were perfectly devout in their workshops; St Anne, St Martha, St Monica, Aquila, Priscilla, in their households; Cornelius, St Sebastian, St Maurice, in the army; Constantine, Helen, St Louis, Blessed Amadeus, St Edward, on their thrones. It has even happened that many have lost perfection in solitude, which notwithstanding is so favourable to perfection, and have preserved it amidst the multitude, which seems

so little favourable to perfection. Lot, says St Gregory, who was so chaste in the city, defiled himself in solitude. Wherever we are, we may and ought to aspire to the perfect life.

## CHAPTER IV

OF THE NECESSITY OF A GUIDE, IN ORDER  
TO ENTER ON THE PATH OF DEVOTION  
AND MAKE PROGRESS THEREIN

THE young Tobias,\* when commanded to go to Rages, said: "I have no knowledge of the way." "Go then," replied his father, "and seek out some man to guide thee." I say the same to you, my Philothea. Do you wish in good earnest to set out on the way to devotion? Seek out some good man to guide and conduct you; it is the admonition of admonitions. Although you may search, says the devout Avila, "you will never find out the will of God so assuredly, as by the way of this humble obedience, so much recommended and practised by all the devout men of old."

The blessed Mother Teresa,† seeing that Madame Catherine of Cardona practised great penances, wished to imitate her in this, against the advice of her confessor, who forbade her to do so, and whom she was tempted to disobey in this respect; but God said to her: "My daughter, thou art following a good and safe way. Seest thou the penance which she practises? But I make more account of thy obedience." And therefore she conceived so great an esteem for this virtue, that besides the obedience which she owed to her superiors she made a special vow to an excellent man, binding herself to follow his direction and guidance, by which she was wonderfully consoled; as many good souls have done both before

\* Tob. v 2, 4.

† St Teresa.

and since her time, who in order to subject themselves more perfectly to God, have submitted their will to that of his servants; a practice which St Catherine of Siena commends very highly in her *Dialogues*. The devout princess St Elizabeth submitted herself with an entire obedience to the learned Master Conrad; and here is one of the counsels which the great St Louis gave to his son just before his death: "Confess frequently, choose a suitable confessor who is a wise man, and who can teach you safely" to do such things as are necessary.

*A faithful friend, says the Scripture,\* is a strong defence; and he that hath found him hath found a treasure. A faithful friend is the medicine of life and of immortality; and they that fear the Lord shall find him.* These divine words have reference principally, as you see, to *immortality*, for which it is necessary above all things to have this *faithful friend*, who may guide our actions by his advice and counsels, and by this means preserve us from the snares and deceits of the evil one; he will be to us a *treasure* of wisdom in our afflictions, in our sorrows, and in our falls; he will serve us as a *medicine* to ease and console our hearts in our spiritual maladies; he will keep us from evil, and will make our good better; and should some infirmity befall us, he will prevent it from being fatal, for he will lift us up from it.

But who shall find this friend? The wise man tells us: *they that fear the Lord*; that is to say, the humble, who earnestly desire their spiritual progress. Since it is of such great importance, Philothea, that you should go with a good guide on this holy journey of devotion, pray to God with great earnestness, to provide you with one who may be according to his heart, and have no doubt; for even though he should have to send an Angel from heaven, as he did to the young Tobias, he will give you one that is good and faithful.

\* Ecclus. vi 14, 16.



And indeed, this guide ought always to be an Angel in your eyes : that is to say when you have found him, do not look upon him as a mere man, nor trust in him as such, nor in his human knowledge, but in God, who will favour you and speak to you by means of this man, putting into his heart and into his mouth whatsoever shall be requisite for your happiness, so that you ought to listen to him as to an Angel, who comes down from heaven to conduct you thither. Treat with him with an open heart, in all sincerity and fidelity, manifesting clearly to him your good and your evil without feint or dissimulation : and by this means your good will be examined and rendered more secure, and your evil will be corrected and remedied ; you will be eased and strengthened thereby in your afflictions, moderated and regulated in your consolations. Have the greatest confidence in him, mingled with a holy reverence, yet so that the reverence diminish not your confidence, nor your confidence hinder in any way your reverence ; confide in him with the respect of a daughter for her father and respect him with the confidence of a son in his mother : in a word, this friendship must be strong and sweet, altogether holy, sacred, divine, and spiritual.

And for this reason, choose one among a thousand, says Avila ; and I say, among ten thousand ; for there are fewer than can be imagined, who are fitted for this office. He must be full of charity, of knowledge, and of prudence ; if one of these three qualities be wanting in him, there is danger. But I say to you once more : pray to God to give you such a one, and, when you have obtained him, bless his divine Majesty, remain constant and do not seek for any others, but go on your way simply, humbly, and trustfully, for you will have a very prosperous journey.



## CHAPTER V

THAT A BEGINNING MUST BE MADE BY  
THE PURGATION OF THE SOUL

*THE flowers*, says the sacred Spouse,\* *have appeared in our land; the time of pruning is come.* What are the flowers of our hearts, O Philothea, but good desires? As soon as they appear, we must put our hand to the pruning-knife to cut away from our conscience all dead and superfluous works. The alien maiden, before wedding an Israelite, had to *put off the raiment wherein she was taken, pare her nails and shave her hair* :† and the soul who aspires to the honour of becoming a spouse of the Son of God, must *put off the old man, and put on the new*,‡ by forsaking sin; she must then pare down and shave away hindrances of every kind, which turn her aside from the love of God. It is the beginning of our health to be purged from our peccant humours.

St Paul was cleansed in a moment with a perfect purgation, as also were St Catherine of Genoa, St Magdalen, St Pelagia, and some others; but this sort of purgation is altogether miraculous and extraordinary in the order of grace, as is the resurrection of the dead in the order of nature, so that we ought not to aspire to it. The ordinary purgation and healing, whether of the body or of the soul, is only brought about little by little, by progressing from improvement to improvement, with effort and by slow degrees. The Angels upon Jacob's ladder have wings, and yet they do not fly, but they ascend and descend in an orderly manner from one step to another. The soul that ascends from sin to devotion is likened to the dawn,§ which, when it comes, does not dispel the darkness in an instant, but little by little. The cure, says the proverb, which is effected gradually, is

\* Cant. ii 12.

† Ephes. iv 22, 24.

‡ Deut. xxi 12, 13.

§ Prov. iv 18.

always more complete; the diseases of the soul, as well as those of the body, come on horseback and post-haste, but they depart on foot and slowly.

Therefore, O Philothea, one must needs be courageous and patient in this undertaking. Alas ! what a pity it is to see some souls, who finding themselves subject to many imperfections, after they have exercised themselves for some time in devotion begin to get anxious, to be troubled and discouraged, almost allowing their hearts to be carried away by the temptation to give up everything, and turn back. But on the other hand, is it not an extreme danger to souls that they should imagine themselves delivered from their imperfections the very first day of their purgation, esteeming themselves to be perfect, almost before they are formed, and trying to fly without wings ? O Philothea, in how great danger they are of a relapse because they have been taken too soon out of the hands of the physician ! Ah ! do not rise *before the light is come*, says the Prophet,\* *rise after you shall have been seated* ; and he himself, putting this lesson into practice, and having already been washed and cleansed, prays to be *washed yet more*.†

The exercise of the purgation of the soul cannot, nor indeed ought it to come to an end, until we die : let us not therefore be troubled because of our imperfections, for our perfection consists in fighting against them, and we cannot fight against them if we do not see them, nor conquer them if we do not encounter them. Our victory does not lie in not feeling them, but in not consenting to them ; and to be harassed by them is not the same thing as to consent to them. Indeed, in order that we may be exercised in humility, it is necessary for us to be sometimes wounded in this spiritual battle : but we are never overcome except when we have lost either life or courage. Now imperfections and venial sins cannot take away the life of grace, for that can

\* Ps. cxxvi 3.

† Ps. l 3.

only be lost by mortal sin; it only remains, then, that they should not cause us to lose courage. Deliver me, O Lord, said David,\* *from pusillanimity and discouragement*. It is a happy condition for us in this warfare, that we shall always be victorious, provided that we are willing to fight.

## CHAPTER VI

### OF THE FIRST PURGATION, WHICH IS THAT OF MORTAL SINS

THE first purgation which must be made is that of sin; the means to make it is the holy Sacrament of Penance. Seek out the most worthy confessor that you can; make use of one of the little books which have been composed to help consciences in making a good confession, as Granada, Bruno, Arias, Auger; read it carefully, and note point by point in what you have offended, from the time that you came to the use of reason up to the present time; and if you mistrust your memory, write down what you have observed. And when you have thus prepared and gathered together the peccant humours of your conscience, detest them and cast them away by as great a contrition and displeasure as your heart can conceive, considering these four things: that by sin you have lost the grace of God, forfeited your place in heaven, incurred the everlasting pains of hell, and renounced the everlasting love of God.

You see clearly, Philothea, that I am speaking of a general confession of your whole life, which, I admit, is not always absolutely necessary, but I think that it will be extremely profitable to you in this beginning: and therefore I strongly recommend it to you. It often happens that the regular confessions of those who lead an ordinary life are full of great defects; for often they make no preparation at all or scarcely

\* Ps. liv 9.

any, and they have not the necessary contrition; indeed it sometimes happens that they go to confession with a tacit intention of committing some sin again, inasmuch as they are not willing to avoid the occasion of the sin, or to take the necessary measures for the amendment of their lives; and in all such cases a general confession is necessary in order to make the soul secure. But in addition to this, a general confession helps us to know ourselves better, stirs us up to a salutary confusion for our past lives, causes us to wonder at the mercy of God, who has borne with us so patiently; it tranquillizes our hearts, refreshes our spirits, urges us to good resolutions, gives our spiritual Father an opportunity of giving us counsels more suitable to our condition, and gives our hearts confidence to express ourselves well at our subsequent confessions.

Therefore when I speak of a general renewal of our heart and of a complete conversion of our soul to God, by the undertaking of the devout life, I have good reason, methinks, to urge you to make this general confession.

## CHAPTER VII

### OF THE SECOND PURGATION, WHICH IS THAT OF THE AFFECTION TO SIN

ALL the Israelites indeed went forth from the land of Egypt, but they did not all go forth from it in affection; and therefore in the desert many of them sighed for the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt.\* So there are penitents who forsake sin indeed, but do not give up their affection to it: that is to say, they resolve to sin no longer, but they have a certain reluctance to deprive themselves of the miserable delectations of sin; their heart renounces sin and departs from it, but it ceases not for all that to look back often in that

\* Num. xi 4, 5.

direction, as Lot's wife looked back at Sodom.\* They abstain from sin as the sick abstain from melons, which they do not eat because the doctor tells them that they will die if they eat them; but they repine at abstaining from them, they talk of them and are unwilling to believe that they are unwholesome, they wish at all events to smell them, and envy those who are able to eat them. For in the same way these weak and faint-hearted penitents abstain for some time from sin, but it is with regret; they would like to be able to sin without being damned; they speak of sin with a certain satisfaction and relish, and esteem those happy who commit sins. A man who is resolved to avenge himself will change his mind in confession, but soon afterwards you may find him among his friends, taking pleasure in speaking of his quarrel, saying that, had it not been for the fear of God, he would have done this or that, and that the divine law in this matter of forgiveness is difficult; that, would to God it were lawful to avenge oneself! Ah! who cannot see that, though this poor man is out of sin, he is nevertheless altogether encumbered with affection to the sin, and that, though he is actually out of Egypt, he is still there in desire, longing for the garlic and the onions which he was wont to eat there? As doth a woman, who having renounced her evil loves, nevertheless takes pleasure in being flattered and courted. Alas! such persons are in great danger.

O Philothea, since you wish to undertake the devout life, you must not only forsake sin, but you must also cleanse your heart from all the affections which are connected with sin; for, besides the danger of a relapse, these miserable affections are a perpetual source of weakness to your spirit, and weigh it down so much that it cannot do good works, readily, diligently and frequently, in which nevertheless lies the true essence of devotion. Those souls who, after quitting the state of sin, still have these affections and

\* Gen. xix 26.



weaknesses, resemble, in my opinion, anaemic girls, who are not ill, but whose actions are all feeble: they eat without relish, sleep without repose, laugh without joy, and rather drag themselves along than walk; for in the same way, these souls do good with such great spiritual weariness, that it takes away all the excellence from their good practices, which are few in number, and feeble in results.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OF THE MEANS OF MAKING THIS SECOND PURGATION

Now the first motive for effecting this second purification is a lively and strong apprehension of the great harm that sin does to us, and by this means we conceive a deep and vehement contrition; for just as contrition, provided that it be true even though it be but weak, especially when joined to the virtue of the sacraments, purges us sufficiently from sin, so when it is strong and vehement, it purges us from all the affections which are connected with sin. A feeble and weak hatred or rancour makes us dislike him whom we hate, and causes us to avoid him; but if it be a deadly and violent hatred, not only do we avoid and dislike him whom we hate, but we loathe him, and cannot endure the society of his friends and relations, yea we abhor even his picture and everything that belongs to him. So, when the penitent only hates his sin with a weak, though true, contrition, he resolves indeed not to sin any more; but when he loathes the sin with a powerful and vigorous contrition, not only does he detest the sin, but also all affection to the sin and all that springs from it or leads to it. Therefore, Philothea, we must enlarge our contrition as much as possible, so that it may embrace everything that is connected with sin. Thus Magdalen at her conversion so completely lost all



relish for her sins and for the pleasures which she had taken in them, that she never thought of them any more; and David\* protested that he hated not only sin but also all paths and ways that lead to it: in this point consists the rejuvenation of the soul which this same Prophet† compares to the renewal of the eagle.

Now, to attain to this realization and contrition, you must exercise yourself carefully in the following meditations, which, if well done, will root out of your heart, with the help of God's grace, sin and the principal affections to sin; and indeed, I have drawn them up entirely for this purpose. You will make them one after the other in the order in which I have set them, taking only one every day, which you will make in the morning if possible, for this is the time most suitable for spiritual actions, and you will turn it over in your mind during the course of the day. But if you be not yet accustomed to make meditation, see what is said about it in the second part.

## CHAPTER IX

### MEDITATION I OF CREATION

#### *Preparation*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Ask him to inspire you.

#### *Considerations*

1. Consider that but a few years ago you were not in the world at all, and that you did not exist. Where were we, O my soul, at that time? The world had already lasted such a long time, and it had no news of us.

\* Ps. cxviii 104, 128.

† Ps. cii 5.

2. God has brought you forth out of this nothingness, to make you what you are, merely of his goodness, for he had no need of you.

3. Consider the being that God has given you; for it is the highest form of being on the earth, capable of living eternally and of being perfectly united to his divine Majesty.

### *Affections and Resolutions*

1. Humble yourself profoundly before God, saying from your heart with the Psalmist: O Lord, I am *as nothing before thee*.<sup>\*</sup> And why *hast thou been mindful of me*?<sup>†</sup> to create me? Alas! my soul, thou wert in the abyss of nothingness, and hadst yet been there, if God had not drawn thee thence; and what couldst thou do in this nothingness?

2. Give thanks to God. O my great and good Creator, how much do I owe thee, since thou hast vouchsafed to take me in my nothingness, in order to make me in thy mercy what I am. What shall I ever be able to do in order worthily to bless thy holy Name and give thanks to thine inestimable goodness?

3. Be filled with confusion. But alas! my Creator, instead of uniting myself to thee by love and service, I have made myself altogether a rebel by my inordinate affections, separating and withdrawing myself from thee, in order to attach myself to sin, giving thee no more honour than if thou hadst not been my Creator.

4. Cast yourself down before God. O my soul, *know that the Lord is thy God; he made thee*,<sup>‡</sup> and thou didst not make thyself. O God, I am *the work of thy hands*.<sup>§</sup>

5. Therefore I do not wish any longer to take pleasure in myself, who for my part am nothing. Wherefore dost thou glorify thyself, O *dust and*

Ps. xxxviii 7.  
‡ Ps. xcix 3.

† Ps. viii 5.  
§ Ps. cxxxvii 8.

*ashes ?\** Yea rather, O true nothingness, wherefore dost thou lift thyself up ? And, in order to humble myself, I will do such or such a thing, bear with such or such contempt. I will change my life and henceforth follow my Creator, and glory in that condition of being which he has given me, making use of it entirely in obedience to his will, by such means as shall be taught me, and concerning which I will enquire of my spiritual Father.

### Conclusion

1. *Thanksgiving*.—Give thanks to God. *Bless thy God, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless his holy Name;*† for his goodness has drawn me forth from nothingness, and his mercy has created me.

2. *Oblation*.—O my God, I offer thee the being which thou hast given me, with all my heart; I dedicate and consecrate it to thee.

3. *Petition*.—O God, strengthen me in these affections and resolutions; O holy Virgin, recommend them to the mercy of thy Son, with all those for whom I ought to pray, etc.

*Pater noster, Ave.*

At the conclusion of your prayer, walk about a little and gather a little nosegay of devotion from the considerations which you have made, in order to inhale its perfume throughout the day.

## CHAPTER X

### MEDITATION II

OF THE END FOR WHICH WE ARE CREATED

### Preparation

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Ask him to inspire you.

\* Ecclus. x 9.

† Ps. cii 1.

*Considerations*

1. God has not placed you in this world for any need that he has of you, for you are of no use at all to him, but solely to show forth his goodness in you, giving you his grace and his glory. And to that end he has given you an understanding to know him, a memory to be mindful of him, a will to love him, an imagination to represent to yourself his benefits, eyes to behold his wondrous works, a tongue to praise him, and so of the other faculties.

2. Since you have been created and placed in the world for this purpose, all actions opposed to this end must be rejected and avoided, and those which conduce not to this end must be despised as vain and superfluous.

3. Consider the wretchedness of worldlings, who pay no heed to this, but live as though they were created only to build houses, plant trees, heap up riches and amuse themselves with trifles.

*Affections and Resolutions*

1. Be ashamed, reproaching your soul with her wretchedness, which has been so great in the past, that she has given scarcely a thought or none at all to all this. Alas ! you will say, what was I thinking of, O my God, when I was not thinking at all of thee ? Of what was I mindful, when I was forgetful of thee ? What did I love, when I was not loving thee ? Alas ! I ought to have been feeding upon truth, and I was filling myself with vanity, and serving the world which is made but to serve me.

2. Detest your past life. I renounce you, vain thoughts and unprofitable reflections ; I abjure you, O hateful and empty remembrances ; I renounce you, faithless and disloyal friendships, useless and miserable service of the world, selfish gratifications, wearisome satisfactions.

3. Be converted to God. And thou, O my God, my Saviour, shalt be henceforth the sole object of my thoughts; no, never will I give myself up to thoughts which are displeasing to thee: my memory shall be filled all the days of my life with the greatness of thy loving-kindness, so sweetly exercised towards myself; thou shalt be the delight of my heart and the sweet object of my affections. Ah! then, such and such trash and fooleries on which I used to waste my time, such and such affections which used to occupy my heart, shall henceforth be held in horror by me; and to this end I will make use of such and such remedies.

### *Conclusion*

1. *Thanksgiving*.—Thank God for having created you for so noble an end. Thou hast made me, O Lord, for thyself, so that I may rejoice eternally in the immensity of thy glory: when shall I be worthy of it, and when shall I bless thee as I ought?

2. *Oblation*.—I offer thee, O my dear Creator, all these affections and resolutions, with my whole heart and soul.

3. *Petition*.—I beseech thee, O God, to accept these my wishes and desires, and to give my soul thy holy blessing, so that it may be able to carry them out by the merits of the blood of thy Son, shed upon the cross, etc.

Make the little nosegay of devotion.

## CHAPTER XI

### MEDITATION III

#### OF THE BENEFITS OF GOD

### *Preparation*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Ask him to inspire you.

*Considerations*

1. Consider the bodily gifts which God has bestowed upon you; your body, so many conveniences for its support, so many lawful consolations for it, such friends, such helps. And compare your own case with that of so many others who are worth more than you, and who have not received these benefits: some disabled in body, in health, in limb; others abandoned to the mercy of reproaches, and of contempt and dishonour; others oppressed with poverty; and God has not willed that you should be so miserable.

2. Consider your gifts of mind: how many persons there are in the world who are dull-witted, raving, insane; and why are not you of the number? God has been favourable to you. How many there are who have been brought up boorishly and in extreme ignorance; and divine Providence has allowed you to receive a good education and an honourable upbringing.

3. Consider your spiritual graces: O Philothea, you are a child of the Church; God has taught you to know him from your youth. How many times has he given you his Sacraments? How many times has he given you inspirations, interior lights, reproaches for your correction? How many times has he pardoned your faults? How many times has he delivered you from the occasions of spiritual ruin, to which you have been exposed? And during these past years have you not had leisure and opportunity to make progress in the good of your soul? Consider a little in detail how sweet and gracious God has been to you.

*Affections and Resolutions*

1. Marvel at the goodness of God. Oh! how good God is towards me! Oh! how good he is! O Lord, how rich in mercy is thy heart, and how generous in lovingkindness. O my soul, let us recount for ever the graces which he has given us.



2. Marvel at your ingratitude. But what am I, O Lord, that *thou art mindful of me*?\* Oh! how great is my unworthiness! Alas! I have trampled under foot thy benefits; I have dishonoured thy graces, misusing them in contempt of thy sovereign goodness; I have opposed the abyss of my ingratitude to the abyss of thy grace and favour.

3. Stir yourself up to gratitude. Well then, O my heart, be no longer faithless, ungrateful and disloyal to this great Benefactor. And *shall not my soul henceforth be subject to God*,† who has wrought so many wonders and graces in me and for me?

4. Ah, then, Philothea, withdraw your heart from such and such pleasures, consecrate it to the service of God who has done so much for it; apply the powers of your soul to know him and be grateful to him, by such and such exercises which are conducive to that purpose; make a careful use of the means which are in the Church, to save yourself and to love God. Yes, I will be assiduous in prayer, in the frequentation of the sacraments, I will listen to the word of God, I will put into practice the inspirations and counsels that I receive.

### Conclusion

1. *Thanksgiving*.—Thank God for the knowledge which he has now given you of your duty, and of all the benefits which you have hitherto received.

2. *Oblation*.—Offer him your heart with all your resolutions.

3. *Petition*.—Ask him to give you the strength to practise them faithfully by the merits of the death of his Son; implore the intercession of the Virgin and of the Saints.

*Pater noster*, etc.

Make the little spiritual nosegay.

\* Ps. viii 5.

† Ps. lxi 1.

## CHAPTER XII

## MEDITATION IV

## OF SIN

*Preparation*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Ask him to inspire you.

*Considerations*

1. Consider how long it is since you began to sin, and see how, since this first commencement, sins have multiplied in your heart; how every day you have added to their number by sins against God, against yourself, against your neighbour, by deed, by word, by desire and thought.

2. Consider your evil inclinations, and how far you have followed them. And on these two points you will see that your *sins are multiplied above the hairs of your head*,\* yea above the sands of the sea.

3. Consider by itself the sin of ingratitude to God, which is a general sin, that spreads itself over all the others and makes them infinitely worse: see then how many benefits God has conferred upon you, and how you have misused them all against the Giver; in particular, how many inspirations have been unheeded, how many good movements rendered unprofitable. And more than all, how many times have you received the sacraments; and where are their fruits? What has become of the precious jewels with which your dear Spouse adorned you? They have all been buried under your iniquities. What preparation have you made for receiving them? Reflect on this ingratitude, how, when God was pursuing you so unceasingly to save you, you were always running away from him to lose yourself.

\* Ps. xxxix 13.

*Affections and Resolutions*

1. Be filled with confusion at your wretchedness. O my God, how dare I appear before thee? Alas! I am but an offscouring of the world and a sink of ingratitude and of iniquity. Is it possible that I have been so disloyal, that there is not a single one of my senses, or of the powers of my soul, which I have not spoilt, violated and soiled, and that there has not been a single day of my life, on which I have not produced such evil effects? Is this the return that I should make for the benefits of my Creator, and for the blood of my Redeemer?

2. Ask pardon, and throw yourself at the feet of the Lord like a prodigal child, like another Magdalen, like a woman who has defiled her marriage-bed with all kinds of adulteries. O Lord, have mercy upon this sinner; alas! O living well of compassion, have pity upon this wretch.

3. Resolve to live better. O Lord, never again, with the help of thy grace, never again will I abandon myself to sin. Alas! I have loved it but too well; I detest it, and embrace thee, O Father of mercy; I wish to live and die in thee.

4. That my past sins may be blotted out, I will accuse myself of them courageously, and will not leave one of them unbanished from my soul.

5. I will do all in my power to tear up the roots of sin from my heart, especially such and such, which trouble me the most.

6. And in order to do so, I will constantly make use of the means recommended to me, and will never think that I have done enough to make amends for such great offences.

*Conclusion*

1. *Thanksgiving*.—Thank God, who has waited patiently for you till this hour, and has given you these good affections.

2. *Oblation*.—Offer your heart to him that he may enable you to give effect to them.

3. *Petition*.—Ask him to give you strength, etc.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MEDITATION V

#### OF DEATH

##### *Preparation*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Ask him to give you his grace.
3. Imagine yourself to be lying ill upon your bed of death, without any hope of recovery.

##### *Considerations*

1. Consider the uncertainty of the day of your death. O my soul, thou must one day quit this body. When will it be? Will it be in winter or in summer? In a town or in the country? In the day or in the night? Will it be without any warning, or with warning? Will it be the result of disease or of some accident? Wilt thou have time to confess or not? Wilt thou be assisted by thy confessor and spiritual Father? Alas! we know nothing at all about any of these things. We only know that we shall die, and always sooner than we expect.

2. Consider that the world will then come to an end, as far as you are concerned, and that there will be no more of it for you; it will turn upside down before your eyes. Yes, for then pleasures, vanities, worldly joys, vain affections will appear as phantoms and shadows. Ah! wretch that I am, for the sake of what trifles and unrealities have I offended my God? You will see that you have forsaken God for the sake of nothing. On the contrary, devotion and good works will seem to you then so desirable and

sweet: and why have I not followed this beautiful and pleasant path? Then the sins which used to seem very little will appear as big as mountains, and your devotion very small.

3. Consider the long and languishing farewells which your soul will bid to this poor world: she will say farewell to riches, to vanities and vain company, to pleasures, to pastimes, to friends and neighbours, to kindred, to children, to husband, to wife, in brief to every creature; and, last of all, to her body, which she will leave pale, emaciated, wasted, hideous and fetid.

4. Consider with what haste your body will be removed and hidden in the earth, and how, when that is done, the world will scarcely give another thought to you, and will not remember you any more than you have remembered others: God rest his soul, they will say, and that is all. O death, how important thou art, how pitiless thou art!

### *Affections and Resolutions*

1. Pray to God and cast yourself into his arms. Alas! Lord, take me under thy protection on that fearful day; let that hour be happy and favourable to me, and rather let all the other hours of my life be sad and sorrowful.

2. Despise the world. Since I know not the hour at which I must quit thee, O world, I will not fix my affections on thee at all. O my dear friends, my dear alliances, let me love you only with a holy friendship, which can last eternally; for why should I unite myself to you in such a way that it is necessary to dissolve and break the bond of union?

3. I will prepare myself for that hour, and will take all the care that is necessary to make the passage happily; I will make sure of the state of my conscience to the best of my ability, and will put in order such and such shortcomings.

*Conclusion*

Thank God for these resolutions which he has given you; offer them to his Majesty; implore him again to give you a happy death through the merits of that of his Son. Implore the aid of the Virgin and of the Saints.

*Pater, Ave Maria.*

Make a nosegay of myrrh.

## CHAPTER XIV

## MEDITATION VI

## OF THE JUDGEMENT

*Preparation*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Ask him to inspire you.

*Considerations*

1. Finally, after the time that God has prescribed for the duration of this world, and after many dreadful signs and portents, at which men will *wither away for fear and expectation*,\* fire coming like a deluge will burn up the whole face of the earth and reduce it to ashes, and nothing that we see upon it will be spared.

2. After this deluge of flames and of thunderbolts, all men will rise again from the earth, except those who are already risen, and at the voice of the Archangel will be gathered together in the valley of Josaphat. But alas ! with what a difference ! for some will have glorious and resplendent bodies, and others hideous and horrible ones.

3. Consider the majesty with which the sovereign Judge will appear, surrounded by all the Angels and

\* Luke xxi 26.



Saints, having before him his Cross shining more brightly than the sun, a sign of mercy for the good and of rigorous justice for the wicked.

4. This sovereign Judge, by his dread command which will be straightway executed, will separate the good from the wicked, setting the former on his right hand and the latter on his left; an eternal separation, after which these two companies will never be together again.

5. When this separation has been effected, and the books of conscience opened, the wickedness of the wicked and the contempt with which they have treated God, will be made manifest to all; as also the repentance of the good, and the effects of God's grace which they have received, and nothing will be hidden: O God, what confusion to the wicked, and what consolation to the good!

6. Consider the final sentence pronounced against the wicked: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his\* companions.* Ponder well these weighty words. *Depart*, he says: it is a word of perpetual abandonment which God says to those miserable wretches, banishing them for ever from his face. He calls them *cursed*: O my soul, what a dreadful malediction! a general malediction, which comprises all times and eternity. He adds *into everlasting fire*: behold, O my heart, this vast eternity. O eternal eternity of sufferings, how fearful thou art!

7. Consider the contrary sentence of the good: *Come*, says the Judge; ah! it is the sweet word of salvation, by which God draws us to himself and receives us into the bosom of his goodness; *ye blessed of my Father*: O dear benediction, which comprises all blessings! *possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* O God, what an incomparable favour, for this kingdom will never have an end!

\* Matt. xxv 41.

*Affections and Resolutions*

1. Tremble, O my soul, at the remembrance of these things. O God, who can ensure my safety on that day, on which *the pillars of heaven\** will tremble for fear?

2. Detest your sins, which alone can cause you to be lost on that dread day.

3. Ah! I will judge myself now, so that I may not be judged; I will examine my conscience and condemn myself, accuse myself and correct myself, so that the Judge may not condemn me on that dread day: I will therefore go to confession, I will put into practice such counsels as may be necessary, etc.

*Conclusion*

1. *Thanksgiving*.—Thank God who has given you the means to ensure your safety on that day, and the time to do penance.

2. *Oblation*.—Offer him your heart to do penance.

3. *Petition*.—Ask him to give you the grace duly to accomplish it.

*Pater noster, Ave.*

Make a nosegay.

## CHAPTER XV

## MEDITATION VII

## OF HELL

*Preparation*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.

2. Humble yourself and implore his help.

3. Imagine to yourself a gloomy city, all burning with brimstone and noisome pitch, full of citizens who are unable to leave it.

\* Job xxvi 11.

*Considerations*

1. The damned are within the abyss of hell, like those within this woeful city, in which they suffer unspeakable torments in all their senses and in all their members, because, as they have employed all their senses and members in sinning, so they will suffer in all their senses and in all their members the pains which are due to sin; their eyes, because of their false and wicked looks, will have to endure the horrible vision of the devils and of hell; their ears, for having taken pleasure in sinful talk, will hear but wailings, lamentations, and cries of despair; and so of the rest.

2. Besides all these torments, there is one greater still, which is the privation and loss of the glory of God, from the sight of which they are excluded for ever. Now if Absalom found that it was a more grievous thing to be excluded from looking on the face of his father David than to be in exile, O God! what a grief it will be to be for ever excluded from looking on thy sweet and gracious face!

3. Consider above all the eternity of these sufferings, which of itself makes hell intolerable. Alas! if a flea in our ear, if the heat of a slight fever makes a short night so long and wearisome, how appalling will the night of eternity be, with so many torments! From this eternity are born eternal despair, unending blasphemies and ravings.

*Affections and Resolutions*

1. Terrify your soul with the words of Isaias: \* O my soul, wouldst thou be able *to live for ever with these everlasting burnings, and in the midst of this devouring fire?* Dost thou truly wish to forsake thy God for ever?

2. Confess that you have deserved it, yea oftentimes! From henceforth I will walk in the opposite direction; why should I descend into this abyss?

\* Chap. xxxiii 14.

3. I will therefore make such and such an effort to avoid sin, which alone can give me this eternal death.

*Thanksgiving, oblation, petition.*

## CHAPTER XVI

### MEDITATION VIII

#### OF PARADISE

#### *Preparation*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Make the invocation.

#### *Considerations*

1. Imagine to yourself a beautiful and still night, and think how good it is to see the heaven with its multitude and variety of stars. Now, add to this beauty that of a lovely day, in such wise that the shining of the sun hinders not the clear sight of the stars and moon; and then say boldly that all this beauty put together is nothing in comparison with the excellence of Paradise. Oh, how desirable and lovely is this place! how precious is this city!

2. Consider the nobility, the beauty and the multitude of the citizens and inhabitants of this happy country: these millions of millions of angels, of cherubim and seraphim, this splendid company of apostles, of martyrs, of confessors, of virgins, of holy matrons; the multitude is innumerable. Oh! how blessed is this company! The least of them is more beautiful to behold than the whole world; what will it be to behold them all? But, O my God, how blessed they are! They ever sing the sweet canticle of everlasting love; they ever rejoice with a gladness that is unfailing; they exchange one with another ineffable pleasures, and live in the consolation of a happy and indissoluble society.

3. Finally, consider what happiness is theirs in their enjoyment of God, who satisfies them for ever with the vision of himself, and thereby fills their hearts with boundless delights. What happiness to be for ever united to the source of their being ! They are there like happy birds, which fly and sing for ever in the air of the Divinity which surrounds them on all sides with inexpressible delights; there, all, vying with one another, yet without envy, sing the praises of the Creator. Blessed be thou for ever, O our sweet and sovereign Creator and Saviour, who art so good to us, and dost communicate to us so liberally thy glory. And God reciprocally blesses all his Saints with an everlasting benediction: Blessed be ye for ever, he says, my beloved creatures, who have served me and who will praise me eternally with such great love and courage.

### *Affections and Resolutions*

1. Admire and praise this heavenly country. Oh ! how beautiful thou art, my dear Jerusalem, and how blessed are thy inhabitants !

2. Reproach your heart with the little courage that it has hitherto displayed in having turned aside so far from the road which leads to this glorious abode. Why have I strayed away so far from my sovereign good ? 'Ah ! wretch that I am, for the sake of such unsatisfying and trivial pleasures, I have a thousand and a thousand times forsaken these eternal and ineffable delights. What possessed me to despise such desirable treasures, for the sake of such empty and contemptible desires ?

3. Nevertheless, aspire fervently to this delightful abode. Oh ! since it has pleased thee, my good and sovereign Lord, to guide my steps back again into thy ways, I will never again turn back. Let us go forward, O my dear soul, towards this infinite rest, let us walk towards this blessed land which is promised to us ; what are we doing in this Egypt ?

4. I will refrain, then, from such things which draw me away from this road or delay my progress.

5. I will do, then, such or such things which can conduct me thither.

*Thanksgiving, oblation, petition.*

## CHAPTER XVII

### MEDITATION IX

#### BY WAY OF ELECTION AND CHOICE OF PARADISE

##### *Preparation*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.

2. Humble yourself before him and ask him to inspire you.

##### *Considerations*

Imagine yourself to be on a bare plain, quite alone with your good Angel, as the young Tobias was when he journeyed to Rages, and imagine that he enables you to see Paradise opened on high, with the pleasures represented in the meditation on Paradise which you have made; and then, that he enables you to see hell opened below, with all the torments described in the meditation on hell. When you have thus made a composition of place in your imagination, and are kneeling therein before your good Angel:

1. Consider that it is most true that you are between Paradise and hell, and that one and the other is open to receive you, according to the choice which you make.

2. Consider that the choice which you make of the one or of the other in this world will last for all eternity in the next.

3. And although the one and the other is open to receive you, according to your choice, yet God, who is prepared to give you either the one by his mercy



or the other by his justice, desires nevertheless with an incomparable desire that you should choose Paradise; and your good Angel urges you thereto with all his power, offering you on the part of God a thousand graces and a thousand helps to assist you in the ascent.

4. Jesus Christ, from heaven above, looks down upon you in his loving-kindness and invites you sweetly: Come, O my dear soul, to the eternal repose in the arms of my goodness, which has prepared immortal delights for thee in the abundance of its love. Behold with the eyes of your spirit the holy Virgin who constrains you with a mother's love: Courage, my daughter, do not despise the desires of my Son, nor so many sighs which I breathe for thee, since together with him I ardently long for thy eternal salvation. Behold the Saints who exhort you, and a million holy souls who constrain you gently, only desiring one day to see your heart united to theirs, to praise God for ever, and assuring you that the road to Heaven is not so difficult as the world declares it to be: Courage, most dear friend, they say; whosoever considers carefully the road of devotion by which we mounted hither, will see that we reached these delights by means of delights incomparably more sweet than those of the world.

### *Election*

1. O hell, I abjure thee now and for ever; I abjure thy torments and thy sufferings; I abjure thy wretched and miserable eternity, and especially these eternal blasphemies and maledictions which thou dost vomit forth for ever against my God. And turning my heart and my soul resolutely towards thee, O beautiful Paradise, eternal glory, unending felicity, I choose irrevocably to make my home and my dwelling for ever within thy beautiful and holy mansions, and in thy holy and desirable tabernacles. I bless, O my God, thy mercy and accept the offer that it pleases

thee to make me of it. O Jesus, my Saviour, I accept thine eternal love, and acknowledge the purchase which thou hast made for me of a place and dwelling in this blessed Jerusalem, not so much for any other thing as to love thee and bless thee for ever.

2. Accept the graces which the Virgin and the Saints offer you; promise them that you will make your journey to them; give your hand to your good Angel that he may conduct you thither; encourage your soul to make this choice.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MEDITATION X

BY WAY OF ELECTION AND CHOICE WHICH  
THE SOUL MAKES OF THE DEVOUT LIFE

#### *Preparation*

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.
2. Humble yourself before his face; ask him to help you.

#### *Considerations*

1. Imagine yourself again to be on a bare plain, quite alone with your good Angel, and imagine that on your left you see the devil seated on a great and lofty throne, with many of the spirits of hell near him, and all about him a great multitude of worldlings, all of whom with bare heads acknowledge him as their lord and pay homage to him, some by one sin, some by another. Observe the bearing of all the miserable courtiers of this abominable king: Behold some raging with hatred, with envy and with anger; others who kill one another; others wasted, careworn and intently occupied in gaining riches; others immersed in vanity, without any sort of pleasure that is not useless and vain; others coarse, engrossed and bemired in their brutish affections. Observe

how they are all without repose, without order and of sorry appearance; observe how they despise one another and how they do but make a pretence of loving one another. In fine, you will see a miserable kingdom, tyrannically ruled by this cursed king, which will move you to compassion.

2. On your right hand see Jesus Christ crucified, who with heartfelt love prays for these poor subjects of the devil, that they may escape from his tyranny, and who calls them to himself; see a great multitude of the devout who are all about him with their Angels. Contemplate the beauty of this kingdom of devotion. What a beautiful sight it is to see this company of virgins, men and women, whiter than the lily; this assembly of widows, full of a holy mortification and humility! See the numbers of married persons who live together so sweetly in that mutual respect which cannot exist without a great charity; see how these devout souls combine the care of their exterior house with the care of their interior one, the love of husband with that of the heavenly Spouse. Look about over that multitude, and you will see that they all have a holy, sweet and amiable appearance, that they listen to our Lord, and would all plant him in the midst of their hearts. They rejoice, but it is with a joy that is gracious, charitable and well-ordered; they love one another, but it is with a love that is sacred and very pure. Those of this devout throng who are in affliction, do not distress themselves very much and are not at all disconcerted. In a word, see the eyes of the Saviour who consoles them, and how all of them together aspire to him.

3. You have now renounced Satan with his sad and miserable company by the good affections which you have conceived; and nevertheless you have not yet reached the King Jesus, nor united yourself to his blessed and holy company of devout persons, but you have been all the while between the one and the other.

4. The holy Virgin with St Joseph, St Louis, St Monica, and a hundred thousand others who are in the company of those that have lived in the world, invite and encourage you.

5. The crucified King calls you by your own name: *Come, O my beloved one, come,*\* that I may crown thee.

### *Election*

1. O world, O detestable company, no, never will you see me under your banner; I have renounced for ever your follies and vanities. King of pride, O king of unhappiness, infernal spirit, I renounce thee with all thy vain pomps; I detest thee with all thy works.

2. And turning to thee, my sweet Jesus, King of happiness and of everlasting glory, I embrace thee with all the powers of my soul, I adore thee with my whole heart, I choose thee, now and for ever, as my King, and by my inviolable fidelity I pay thee irrevocable homage; I submit myself to the obedience of thy holy laws and ordinances.

3. O holy Virgin, my dear Lady, I choose thee for my guide, I place myself under thy banner, I offer thee a particular respect and a special reverence. O my holy Angel, present me to this sacred assembly; do not abandon me until I reach this blessed company, with which I say, and will say for ever in testimony of my choice: *Vive Jesus, vive Jesus.*

## CHAPTER XIX

### HOW TO MAKE THE GENERAL CONFESSION

THERE, then, my dear Philothea, are the meditations required for our purpose. When you have made them, go courageously in a spirit of humility to make your general confession; but pray do not allow yourself to be troubled by any sort of apprehension.

\* Cant. iv 8.

The scorpion which has stung us is poisonous when it stings us, but when it is made into an oil it is an excellent remedy against its own sting; sin is shameful when we commit it, but when it is changed into confession and repentance, it is honourable and salutary. Contrition and confession are so beautiful and sweet-smelling, that they efface the ugliness and dissipate the stench of sin. Simon the leper said that Magdalen was a sinner; but our Lord said, no, and spoke only of the sweet perfumes which she poured out, and of the greatness of her charity. If we be truly humble, Philothea, our sins will displease us infinitely because God is offended thereby; but the accusation of our sins will be sweet and agreeable to us, because God is honoured thereby: it is in some sort a relief to us to state clearly to the physician the sickness which is troubling us. When you come before your spiritual Father, imagine yourself to be on Mount Calvary beneath the feet of Jesus Christ crucified, whose precious blood trickles down from all parts to wash you from your iniquities; for though it is not the actual blood of the Saviour, it is nevertheless the merit of his blood shed for us, which waters abundantly the penitents around the confessionals. Open your heart wide, then, that the sins may go out by confession; for the more they go out of your heart, the more will the precious merit of the divine Passion enter in to fill it with blessings.

But say everything simply and unreservedly; satisfy your conscience completely in this matter, once and for all. And when you have done so, listen to the advice and admonitions of the servant of God, and say in your heart: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*.<sup>\*</sup> Yes, it is God, Philothea, to whom you are listening, since he has said to his representatives: *He that heareth you, heareth me*.<sup>†</sup> Afterwards take in your hands the following protestation, which serves as a conclusion to all your contrition, and

\* 1 Kings iii 9.

† Luke x 16.



which you should first have meditated on and considered; read it attentively and with as much feeling as you can.

## CHAPTER XX

SOLEMN PROTESTATION, TO ENGRAVE ON  
THE SOUL THE RESOLUTION TO SERVE  
GOD AND TO CONCLUDE THE ACTS OF  
REPENTANCE

I, THE undersigned, in the presence of the eternal God and of all the court of heaven, having considered the boundless mercy of his divine goodness towards me, most unworthy and wretched creature, whom he created out of nothing, preserved, sustained, delivered from so many dangers, and loaded with so many benefits; but above all, having considered the incomprehensible sweetness and clemency with which this most good God has so graciously borne with me in my iniquities, so often and so lovingly inspired me, inviting me to amend my ways, and so patiently waiting for me to repent until this N—— year of my age, in spite of all my ingratitude, disloyalty and faithlessness, whereby deferring my conversion and despising his graces I have so shamelessly offended him; after having considered also that on the day of my holy Baptism I was so happily and holily vowed and consecrated to my God to be his child, and that, contrary to the profession which was then made in my name, I have so many times miserably and detestably profaned and violated my spirit, applying it and employing it against his divine Majesty; returning now at last to myself, prostrate in heart and in spirit before the throne of divine justice, I acknowledge, avow and confess myself to be rightly attainted and convicted of the crime of high treason, and guilty of the death and passion of Jesus Christ, by reason of the sins which I have committed, for which he died and



suffered the torment of the cross, so that I deserve in consequence to be lost and damned for ever.

But turning towards the throne of the infinite mercy of this same eternal God, after having detested with my whole heart and with all my strength the iniquities of my past life, I ask and humbly pray for grace and pardon and mercy, together with an entire absolution from my sins, in virtue of the death and passion of this same Lord and Redeemer of my soul, relying on which as on the sole foundation of my hope, I again promise and renew the sacred profession of fidelity made on my behalf to my God at my Baptism, renouncing the devil, the world and the flesh, detesting their miserable suggestions, vanities and concupiscences, for all the time of this present life and for all eternity. And turning to my God who is full of loving-kindness and compassion, I desire, propose, intend and resolve irrevocably to serve him and love him now and eternally, to this end giving, dedicating and consecrating to him my spirit with all its faculties, my soul with all its powers, my heart with all its affections, my body with all its senses; protesting that I will nevermore misuse any part of my being against this divine will and sovereign Majesty, to which I sacrifice and immolate myself in spirit, to be evermore loyal, obedient and faithful to him, without ever wishing to retract or change this my resolution. But alas ! if through some suggestion of the enemy or through some human infirmity, I should in any way contravene this my resolution and consecration, I protest this very day and resolve, with the assistance of the Holy Ghost, to rise again as soon as I perceive my fall, and to turn to the divine mercy again, without any delay whatsoever.

This is my inviolable and irrevocable will, intention and resolution, which I avow and confirm without reserve or exception, in the same sacred presence of my God, and in the sight of the Church triumphant, and in the presence of the Church

militant my Mother, who hears this my declaration in the person of him who, as her minister, hears me make this declaration. Be pleased, O my eternal God, all-powerful and all-good, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to confirm this resolution in me, and to accept this sincere and interior sacrifice of mine in the odour of sweetness; and as it has pleased thee to give me the inspiration and the will to make it, give me also the strength and the grace necessary to fulfil it. O my God, *thou art my God,\* the God of my heart,†* the God of my soul, the God of my spirit; I acknowledge thee as such and adore thee now and for all eternity.

*Vive Jesus.*

## CHAPTER XXI

### CONCLUSION OF THIS FIRST PURGATION

THIS protestation made, be attentive and open the ears of your heart, to hear in spirit the words of your absolution, which the Saviour of your heart himself, seated upon the throne of his mercy, will pronounce on high in Heaven before all the Angels and Saints, at the same time that the priest in his name absolves you here below on earth: so that all this throng of the blessed, rejoicing at your happiness, will sing a spiritual canticle with incomparable joy, and they will all give the kiss of peace and fellowship to your heart, which is now restored to grace and sanctified.

O God, Philothea, what an admirable contract, by which you make a happy compact with his divine Majesty, since in giving yourself to him you gain him and yourself also for eternal life! It only remains for you to take the pen in your hand, sign with a good heart the act of protestation, and afterwards go to the altar, where God on his part will sign and seal your absolution and the promise which

\* Ps. xv 1.

† Ps. lxxii 25.

he will give you of his Paradise, putting himself by his Sacrament like a signet and sacred *seal upon your* renovated *heart*. In this way, methinks, Philothea, your soul will be purged from sin and from all affection to sin.

But inasmuch as these affections easily spring up again in the soul, by reason of our infirmity and of our concupiscence, which can be mortified, but which cannot die whilst we live here below on earth, I will give you some counsels, which, if practised well, will preserve you in the future from mortal sin and from all affection to it, so that it may never have a place in your heart. And inasmuch as these same counsels serve also for a more perfect purification, before giving them to you, I will say something to you about this more absolute purity to which I desire to lead you.

## CHAPTER XXII

THAT WE MUST PURIFY OURSELVES FROM  
THE AFFECTIONS WHICH WE HAVE TO  
VENIAL SINS

As the light of day grows stronger, we see more clearly in the mirror the spots and stains upon our faces; even so, as the interior light of the Holy Spirit enlightens our consciences, we see more distinctly and more clearly the sins, inclinations and imperfections which are able to hinder us from attaining to true devotion; and the selfsame light which enables us to see these blemishes and defects, inflames us with the desire to cleanse and purify ourselves from them.

You will discover, then, my dear Philothea, that, besides the mortal sins and the affections to mortal sins, from which you have been purified by the foregoing exercises, you still have in your soul divers inclinations and affections to venial sins. I do not say that you will discover venial sins, but I say that

you will discover affections and inclinations to them. Now the one is very different from the other; for we can never be altogether free from venial sins, at least so as to remain for any long time in such a state; but it is well within our power to have no affection to venial sins. Indeed, it is one thing to lie once or twice from gaiety of heart in a matter of little importance, but it is quite another thing to take pleasure in lying and to be addicted to this kind of sin.

And I say now that we must purify our souls from all affection to venial sins—that is to say, we must not deliberately harbour the will to continue and persevere in any kind of venial sin, for it would be too great a baseness to resolve, quite wittingly, to keep in our consciences a thing so displeasing to God, as is the willingness to displease him. Venial sin, however small it may be, displeases God, though not to such an extent that he will reject or damn us for it. But if venial sin displeases God, the affection which we have to venial sin is no other thing than a resolve to be willing to displease his divine Majesty. Is it possible that a noble soul should will not only to displease her God, but to take pleasure in displeasing him?

These affections, Philothea, are directly contrary to devotion, just as the affections to mortal sin are contrary to charity; they weaken the powers of the spirit, hinder divine consolations, open the door to temptations, and, though they do not kill the soul, yet they make her exceedingly sick. *Dying flies*, says the Wise Man,\* *spoil the sweetness of the ointment* : he means to say that flies, when they do not remain long upon the ointment, but eat it in passing, only spoil that which they take, the rest remaining good; but when they die in the ointment, they deprive it of its value, and make it worthless. Even so venial sins, entering into a devout soul, and staying no length of time there, do not cause it much

\* Eccles. x i.

damage; but if these same sins remain in the soul by reason of the affection which she has to them, they undoubtedly cause her to lose the sweetness of the ointment—that is to say, holy devotion.

Spiders do not kill the bees, but they spoil and corrupt their honey, and entangle their honeycombs in the webs which they spin about them, so that the bees are no longer able to carry on their work; that is to say, when the spiders make any stay there. So venial sin does not kill the soul, but it spoils devotion, and so hampers the powers of the soul with bad habits and inclinations, that she is no longer able to exercise that promptitude of charity in which devotion consists—that is to say, when venial sin dwells in our consciences by the affection which we have to it. It is nothing, Philothea, to tell a little lie, to be a little ill-regulated in words, in actions, in looks, in dress, in finery, in playing games, in dancing, provided that as soon as these spiritual spiders enter our conscience, we drive them away again and banish them as the bees drive away the corporal spiders. But if we allow them to stay in our hearts, and not only that, if we take pleasure in retaining them there and multiplying them, soon we shall see our honey lost, and the hive of our conscience corrupted and ruined. But I say once again, what likelihood is there that a noble soul should take pleasure in offending her God, should like to be displeasing to him, and should be ready to will what she knows to be offensive to him?

## CHAPTER XXIII

THAT WE MUST PURIFY OURSELVES FROM  
AFFECTION TO USELESS AND DANGEROUS THINGS

GAMES, balls, feasts, pageants, and plays, in themselves are nowise evil, but indifferent, it being possible for them to be carried out well or ill; nevertheless,



such things are always dangerous, and to have an affection to them is still more dangerous. I say, then, Philothea, that though it is lawful to play, to dance, to adorn oneself, to be present at proper plays, and to feast, yet to have an affection to such things is contrary to devotion, and extremely hurtful and dangerous. It is not wrong to do such things, but it is wrong to have an affection to them. It is a pity to sow in the soil of our hearts such vain and foolish affections: for they take the place of good ones, and hinder the powers of the soul from being employed in good inclinations.

Thus the Nazarites of old abstained not only *from everything that may make a man drunk*, but also from *grapes* and from *whatever is pressed out of the grape* ;\* not indeed that grapes and verjuice are intoxicants, but because in taking verjuice there is a danger of exciting the desire to eat grapes, and in eating grapes, of stimulating the appetite to drink must and wine. Now I do not say that we cannot make use of these dangerous things; but I do say that we can never set our affections upon them without injury to devotion. Stags, when they have put on too much flesh, withdraw and retire into their thickets, knowing that their fat is such a burden to them that they are not fit to run, should they chance to be attacked; so also the heart of man burdening itself with these useless, superfluous and dangerous affections, cannot run after God readily, freely and easily, which is the true mark of devotion. Little children take pleasure in running after butterflies, and get heated in the chase, and no one thinks ill of it, because they are children. But is it not a ridiculous, nay, rather a lamentable thing, to see grown-up persons display eagerness and pleasure in the pursuit of such unworthy trifles as are the things which I have named, which, besides their uselessness, put us in danger of becoming undisciplined and disordered

\* Num. vi 3.



in their pursuit? Therefore, my dear Philothea, I tell you that we must purify ourselves from these affections; and though the acts be not always contrary to devotion, yet the affections to such acts are always prejudicial to it.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THAT WE MUST PURIFY OURSELVES FROM EVIL INCLINATIONS

WE have still, Philothea, certain natural inclinations, which, inasmuch as they have not taken their origin from our own personal sins, are not properly sins, neither mortal nor venial, but are called imperfections, and the acts which are the outcome of these inclinations are called defects and shortcomings. For example, St Paula, according to the statement of St Jerome, had a great inclination to sadness and grief, so that at the death of her children and of her husband, she was in danger of dying from grief: this was an imperfection, and not a sin, since it was against her liking and her will. There are some persons who are by nature frivolous, others serious; some slow to accept the opinions of others; some prone to indignation, others to anger, others to love—and, in short, there are few persons in whom some such imperfections may not be observed. Now, although they are as it were proper and natural to each one, yet by care and by a contrary affection they may be corrected and moderated; yea, we may even deliver and purify ourselves from them: and I tell you, Philothea, that we must needs do so. It has been found possible to change bitter almond-trees into sweet, simply by piercing them at the foot to let out the sap; and why should not we be able to let out our perverse inclinations, and so become better? There is no natural temperament so good that it may not be made evil by vicious habits; there

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is no natural temperament so refractory that it may not, first by the grace of God and then by industry and diligence, be subdued and overcome.

Therefore I am now going to give you some counsels, and set forth some exercises, by means of which you will purify your soul from dangerous affections, from imperfections, and from all affection to venial sins, and thus you will render your conscience more and more secure against all mortal sin. May God give you the grace to practise them well.

SECOND PART OF THE  
INTRODUCTION

CONTAINING DIVERS COUNSELS  
FOR THE ELEVATION OF THE  
SOUL TO GOD BY PRAYER AND  
THE SACRAMENTS





## CHAPTER I

### OF THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

**I**NASMUCH as prayer places our understanding in the clearness of the divine light, and exposes our will to the warmth of heavenly love, there is nothing which so purges our understanding of its ignorance and our will of its depraved inclinations; it is the water of benediction, which, when our souls are watered therewith, makes the plants of our good desires revive and flourish, cleanses our souls of their imperfections, and quenches the thirst caused by the passions of our hearts.

But above all I recommend to you prayer of the mind and heart, and especially that which has for its subject the life and passion of our Lord; for by beholding him often in meditation, your whole soul will be filled with him; you will learn his disposition, and you will form your actions after the model of his. He is *the light of the world*,\* and therefore it is in him, by him, and for him that we must be enlightened and illuminated; he is the tree of desire, in the shadow of which we must seek refreshment; he is the *living well of Jacob*,† for the cleansing of all our stains. In fine, as children by listening to their mothers, and prattling with them, learn to speak their language, so we, by keeping close to the Saviour in meditation, and observing his words, his actions, and his affections, shall learn, with the help of his grace, to speak, to act, and to will like him.

We must stop there, Philothea, and believe me, we cannot go to God the Father, but by this door; for just as the glass of a mirror could not catch our

\* John viii 12.

† John iv 6.

reflection if the back thereof were not covered with tin or lead, so the Divinity could not well be contemplated by us in this world below if it were not united to the sacred humanity of the Saviour, whose life and death are the most appropriate, sweet, delicious and profitable subjects which we can choose for our ordinary meditations. The Saviour does not call himself for nothing, *the bread which came down from heaven*,\* for, as bread should be eaten with all sorts of meat, so the Saviour ought to be meditated upon, considered, and sought after in all our prayers and actions. His life and death have been arranged and distributed into divers points by many authors, in order to serve for meditation: those whom I recommend to you are St Bonaventure, Bellintani, Bruno, Capiglia, Granada, and Da Ponte.

Spend an hour in meditation every day, sometime or other before the midday meal, if possible in the early part of your morning, because your mind will be less distracted and more refreshed after the repose of the night. But do not spend more than an hour therein, unless your spiritual Father should expressly say so.

If you can perform this exercise in the church, and find sufficient quiet there, it will be a very convenient and suitable thing for you, because no one, neither father nor mother nor wife nor husband nor anyone else can well hinder you from staying an hour in the church; whereas, if you be in any sort of subjection to others, you might not be able to promise yourself so uninterrupted an hour in your own house.

Begin all your prayers, be they mental or vocal, with the presence of God, and make no exception to this rule, and you will soon perceive how profitable it will be to you.

If you will take my advice, you will say your *Pater*, your *Ave* and the *Credo* in Latin; but you will also

\* John vi 51.



take care to understand exactly what the words mean in your mother tongue, so that, whilst saying them in the language of the Church, you may nevertheless relish the admirable and delicious meaning of these holy prayers, which you should say, fixing your attention earnestly upon their meaning and stirring up your affections thereby; not hurrying in order to say many of them, but taking care to say from your heart those which you do say; for one single *Pater* said with feeling is worth more than many recited quickly and in haste.

The rosary is a very profitable kind of prayer, provided that you understand how to say it properly; and in order to do so, provide yourself with one or other of the little books which explain how it should be recited. It is also good to say the litanies of our Lord, of our Lady, and of the Saints, and all the other vocal prayers which are to be found in approved manuals and prayer-books, yet on the understanding that, if you have the gift of mental prayer, you always reserve for that the principal place; so that if after making mental prayer you cannot say any vocal prayers at all, either because of your many occupations, or for some other reason, be not disturbed on that account, but merely say, before or after your meditation, the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation, and the Apostles' Creed.

If, while saying your vocal prayers, you feel your heart drawn and invited to interior or mental prayer, do not resist the attraction, but allow your mind to go gently in that direction, and be not concerned at not having finished the vocal prayers which you had intended to say; for the mental prayer, which you will have made in their stead, is more pleasing to God and more profitable for your soul. I except the Office of the Church, if you are under an obligation to say it; for in that case you must fulfil your obligation.

If it should happen that all your morning passes

without this holy exercise of mental prayer, either because of your many occupations, or for some other reason (which you ought to guard against as far as possible), try to repair this loss after the midday meal, at some hour which is as far removed as possible from it, because if you should make your prayer soon after your meal, before properly digesting your food, you would be much troubled by drowsiness, and your health might suffer thereby. But if you cannot make mental prayer at all during the day, you must repair this loss by multiplying ejaculatory prayers, and by reading some book of devotion, together with some penance which may prevent the repetition of this failure; and at the same time make a firm resolution to resume the practice on the following day.

## CHAPTER II

A SHORT METHOD FOR MEDITATION. AND  
FIRST, OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD, WHICH  
IS THE FIRST POINT OF THE PREPARATION

BUT perhaps you do not know, Philothea, how to make mental prayer; for it is a thing which unhappily few persons in this age of ours know how to practise. For this reason, I will give you a simple and brief method to that end, until such time as, by reading some of the good books which have been composed on this subject, and above all by practice, you may be more fully instructed. I note first the preparation, which consists in two points, the first of which is to place yourself in the presence of God, and the second to invoke his assistance. I am now going to set forth four principal ways of placing yourself in the presence of God, which you may make use of in this preparation.

The first consists in a lively and attentive apprehension of the omnipresence of God, which means that God is in everything and everywhere, and that

there is not any place or thing in this world where he is not most assuredly present; so that, just as the birds, wherever they fly, always encounter the air, so, wherever we go, or wherever we are, we find God present. Everyone knows this truth, but everyone is not attentive to grasp it. Blind men, even though they see not a prince who is present with them, fail not to behave with respect, if they are told of his presence; but the truth is that, since they do not see him, they easily forget that he is present, and having forgotten it, they lose yet more easily respect and reverence. Alas! Philothea, we do not see God who is present with us; and, although faith tells us of his presence, yet, since we do not see him with our eyes, we forget it very often, and behave as though God were very far from us; for although we know well that he is present in all things, yet if we do not think about it at all, it is just as if we knew it not. Therefore, before prayer we must always stir up our souls to an attentive thought and consideration of this presence of God. Such was the way in which David apprehended God's presence, when he cried out: \* *If I ascend into heaven, O my God, thou art there ; if I descend into hell, thou art present ;* and thus we should make use of the words of Jacob, who when he saw the holy ladder said: † *How terrible is this place ! Indeed the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.* He means to say that he was not thinking of it; for he could not be ignorant that God was in everything and everywhere. When therefore you come to prayer, you must say with all your heart, and to your heart: O my heart, my heart, God is truly here.

The second way of placing yourself in this holy presence, is to think that not only is God in the place where you are, but that he is in a very special manner in your heart and in the depth of your spirit, which he quickens and animates with his divine presence, since he is there as the heart of your heart, and the

\* Ps. cxxxviii 8.

† Gen. xxviii 17, 16.

spirit of your spirit; for as the soul, being spread throughout the body, is present in every part thereof, and yet resides in a special manner in the heart, so God, being present in all things, is present nevertheless in a special manner in our spirit and therefore David called God *the God of his heart* ;\* and St Paul said that *we live and move and are in God*.† In the consideration therefore of this truth, you will stir up in your heart a great reverence for God, who is so intimately present there.

The third way is to consider our Saviour, who in his humanity looks from Heaven upon all persons in the world, but particularly upon Christians who are his children, and more especially upon those who are in prayer, whose actions and behaviour he observes. Now this is not a mere imagination, but a most certain truth; for, though we do not perceive him, yet he looks upon us from above. St Stephen saw him thus at the time of his martyrdom. So that we may truly say with the Spouse;‡ *Behold he standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices.*

The fourth way consists in making use of the imagination alone, representing to ourselves the Saviour in his sacred humanity, as though he were near to us, just as we are wont to represent our friends to ourselves saying: I imagine that I see such a one who is doing this or that; it seems to me that I see him, or some such thing. But if the most holy Sacrament of the altar be present, then this presence will be real and not merely imaginary; for the species and appearances of the bread are as it were a tapestry, behind which our Lord really present sees and observes us, though we see him not in his own form.

You will make use then of one of these four ways of putting your soul in the presence of God, before prayer; and you must not seek to make use of them all together, but only one at a time, and that briefly and simply.

\* Ps. lxxii 26.

† Acts xvii 28.

‡ Cant. ii 9

## CHAPTER III

OF THE INVOCATION WHICH IS THE SECOND  
POINT OF THE PREPARATION

THE invocation is made in this manner: your soul having realized that she is in the presence of God, prostrates herself with profound reverence, acknowledging her unworthiness to appear before so sovereign a Majesty, and nevertheless, knowing that his goodness desires it, she asks of him the grace to serve him well, and to adore him in this meditation. If you wish to do so, you may make use of some short and ardent words, such as these of David: *Cast me not away, O God, from thy face, and take not the favour of thy Holy Spirit from me.\* Make thy face to shine upon thy servant,† and I will consider thy wonders.‡ Give me understanding and I will search thy law, and I will keep it with my whole heart.§ I am thy servant, give me understanding;||* and other similar words. You would do well also to invoke your good Angel, and the holy persons who are concerned in the mystery upon which you are meditating: as in that of the death of our Lord, you may invoke our Lady, St John, St Mary Magdalen, and the good thief, in order that the interior sentiments and movements which they received may be communicated to you: and in the meditation on your own death, you may ask your good Angel, who will be present at it, to inspire you with fitting considerations; and so also with other mysteries.

\* Ps. l<sup>3</sup> 13.

† Ps. cxviii 18.

‡ Ps. xxx 17.

§ Ps. cxviii 34.

|| Ps. cxviii 125.



## CHAPTER IV

OF THE SETTING FORTH OF THE MYSTERY,  
WHICH IS THE THIRD POINT OF THE  
PREPARATION

AFTER these two ordinary points of the meditation, there is a third which is not common to all sorts of meditations; it is that which is called by some the composition of place, and by others the interior lection. This is no other thing than to represent to the imagination the scene of the mystery upon which the meditation is made, as though it were actually taking place in our presence. For example, if you wish to meditate upon our Saviour on the cross, you will imagine yourself to be on mount Calvary, and that you see there all that was done and said on the day of the Passion; or, if you will (for it is all one) you will imagine that the crucifixion is taking place in the very spot where you are, in the way described by the Evangelists.

The same applies to meditations on death, as I have noted in the meditation on this subject, and also to that on hell, and to all similar mysteries which are concerned with things visible and perceptible to the senses; for as regards other mysteries, such as the greatness of God, the excellence of virtue, the end for which we are created, which are invisible things, there is no question of making use of this kind of imagination. It is true that we may very well employ some sort of similitude and comparison to help us in our consideration of such mysteries; but that is somewhat difficult to find, and I only wish to treat with you very simply, and in such a way that your mind may not be wearied with much seeking.

Now, by means of this imaginary scene we confine our spirit within the mystery upon which we intend to meditate, so that it may not range hither and thither, just as we confine a bird within a cage, or



as we put jesses on a hawk so that it may remain upon the fist. Yet some will tell you that, in the representation of these mysteries, it is better to make use of the simple thought of faith, and of a simple apprehension entirely mental and spiritual, or else to consider that the things are done within your own spirit; but that is too subtle for a commencement, and until such time as God may raise you higher, I counsel you, Philothea, to remain in the low valley which I have shown you.

## CHAPTER V

### OF THE CONSIDERATIONS, WHICH ARE THE SECOND PART OF THE MEDITATION

AFTER the action of the imagination, follows the action of the understanding, which we call meditation, which is no other thing than one or many considerations made in order to stir up our affections towards God and divine things: and herein meditation differs from study and from other thoughts and considerations which are not made to acquire virtue or the love of God, but for other ends and intentions, as, for example, to become learned, to write, or to argue. Having then confined your spirit, as I have said, within the enclosure of the subject upon which you intend to meditate, either by the imagination if the subject be something perceptible to the senses, or by the simple setting forth thereof, if it be something imperceptible, you will begin to make considerations on it, some examples of which you will find fully developed in the meditations which I have given you. And if you find sufficient relish, light and fruit in one of these considerations, stay there without passing on to another, acting like the bees, who do not leave a flower so long as they find any honey there to gather. But if you do not find anything to your liking in one of these considerations

after having dealt with it and tried it for a little while, pass on to another; but proceed quite gently and simply in this matter, without undue haste.

## CHAPTER VI

OF THE AFFECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS,  
WHICH ARE THE THIRD PART OF THE  
MEDITATION

MEDITATION produces good movements in the will or affective part of our soul, such as the love of God and of our neighbour, the desire of heaven and eternal glory, zeal for the salvation of souls, imitation of the life of our Lord, compassion, admiration, joy, fear of God's displeasure, of judgement and of hell, hatred of sin, confidence in the goodness and mercy of God, confusion for our bad lives in the past; and in these affections our spirit should expand and extend itself as much as possible. And if you desire to be helped in this matter, take in hand the first volume of the *Meditations* of Dom Andres Capiglia, and read the preface, for he shows therein how to enlarge these affections; and Father Arias does the same more fully still in his *Treatise on Prayer*.

However, Philothea, you must not dwell upon these general affections to such an extent that you omit to convert them into special and particular resolutions for your correction and amendment. For example, the first word that our Lord spoke on the cross will doubtless stir up in your soul a good affection of imitation—namely, the desire to pardon your enemies and to love them. But I say now that this is of little value, if you do not add to it a special resolution to this effect: Well then! I will not hereafter be offended by such or such annoying words, which such or such a person, a neighbour of mine perhaps, or a servant, may say of me, nor by such or such an affront which may be put upon me by

this person or by that: on the contrary, I will say and do such or such a thing to gain him, and appease him, and so also in other matters. By this means, Philothea, you will correct your faults in a very short time, whereas by the affections alone you will do so but slowly and with difficulty.

## CHAPTER VII

### OF THE CONCLUSION AND SPIRITUAL NOSEGAY

FINALLY, the meditation must be closed by three acts which should be made with as much humility as possible. The first is the act of thanksgiving by which we thank God for the affections and resolutions which he has given us, and for his goodness and mercy which we have discovered in the mystery upon which we have been meditating. The second is the act of oblation by which we offer to God this same goodness and mercy of his, the death, the blood, and the virtues of his Son, and, together with these, our own affections and resolutions. The third is the act of petition, by which we demand of God and implore him to communicate to us the graces and virtues of his Son, and to bless our affections and resolutions, so that we may be able faithfully to put them into practice; then we pray in like manner for the Church, for our pastors, relations, friends and others, availing ourselves, for this purpose, of the intercession of our Lady, and of the Angels and Saints. Lastly, I have noted that one should say the *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria*, which is the general and necessary prayer of all the faithful.

To all this I have added that one should gather a little nosegay of devotion. My meaning is as follows: Those who have been walking in a beautiful garden do not leave it willingly without taking away with them four or five flowers, in order to inhale

their perfume and carry them about during the day: even so, when we have considered some mystery in meditation, we should choose one or two or three points in which we have found most relish, and which are specially proper to our advancement, in order to remember them throughout the day, and to inhale their perfume spiritually. Now we should do this in the place where we have made our meditation, either staying where we are, or walking about alone for a little while afterwards.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOME VERY PROFITABLE COUNSELS UPON THE SUBJECT OF MEDITATION

ABOVE all things, Philothea, when you quit your meditation, bear in mind the resolutions and intentions which you have formed, in order to practise them carefully during the day. This is the great fruit of meditation, without which oftentimes it is not only useless, but hurtful, because virtues meditated upon and not practised, sometimes puff up the spirit and the heart, making us think that we are such as we have resolved and determined to be, which doubtless is true if the resolutions are vigorous and solid; but they are not such, nay, rather vain and dangerous, if they be not put into practice. We must, therefore, by all means try to practise them, and to avail ourselves of the occasions, be they small or great, of putting them into practice. For example, if I have resolved to win by gentleness the hearts of those who offend me, I will seek that very day an opportunity of meeting them in order to greet them amicably; if I fail to meet them, I will at least try to speak well of them and pray to God on their behalf.

When you have finished this prayer of the heart, you must take care not to give any jolt to your heart,

lest you spill the balm which you have received by means of your prayer; I mean by this, that you must keep silence for a little while, if possible, and move your heart quite gently from your prayer to your occupations, retaining, for as long a time as you can, the feelings and the affections which you have conceived. A man who receives some precious liquor in a beautiful porcelain vase to carry home with him walks carefully, not looking from one side to the other, but sometimes straight before him, for fear of stumbling over a stone or of making a false step, sometimes at his vase to see if it be well balanced. You must act in like manner when you have finished your meditation: do not withdraw your thoughts from it all at once, but look only before you. For example, if you must meet someone, to whom you are obliged to speak, or listen, you cannot help it and you must put up with it, but in such a way that you are mindful also of your heart, so that the cordial of holy prayer may be spilt as little as possible.

You must even accustom yourself to know how to pass from prayer to all sorts of actions which your vocation and profession justly and lawfully requires of you, though they seem very far removed from the affections which you have received in prayer. I mean that the advocate must learn to pass from prayer to pleading; the merchant to business; the married woman to the duties of her state and to the cares of her household, with so much gentleness and tranquillity that the spirit be not disturbed thereby; for, since both are according to the will of God, we must make the passage from the one to the other in a spirit of humility and devotion.

It may happen to you sometimes that immediately after the preparation you will find your affection stirred up towards God: then, Philothea, you must give it the reins, without trying to follow the method which I have given you; for although ordinarily the consideration ought to precede the affections and



resolutions, yet if the Holy Spirit give you the affections before the consideration, you should not make the consideration, since it is only made in order to stir up the affections. In a word, whensoever the affections present themselves to you, you must receive them and make room for them, whether they come before or after all the considerations. And although I have placed the affections after all the considerations, I have only done so the better to distinguish the different parts of prayer; for at the same time it is a general rule that one must never restrain the affections, but always allow them free play when they present themselves. And this I say not only with regard to the other affections, but also with regard to the thanksgiving, the oblation, and the petitions, all of which may be made among the considerations; for they must not be restrained any more than the other affections, even though afterwards, in order to bring the meditation to a conclusion, it may be necessary to repeat and resume them. But as to the resolutions, they should be made after the affections, and at the end of the whole meditation, before the conclusion, because, as they represent to us particular and familiar objects, if we were to make them among the affections, they might be a cause of distraction to us.

Among the affections and resolutions it is good to make use of colloquies, and to speak sometimes to our Lord, sometimes to the Angels, and to the persons represented in the mysteries, to the Saints and to oneself, to one's own heart, to sinners, and even to inanimate creatures, as we see that David does in his psalms, and the other Saints in their meditations and prayers.



## CHAPTER IX

FOR THE DRYNESS WHICH MAY BE  
EXPERIENCED IN MEDITATION

IF it should happen, Philothea, that you have neither relish nor consolation in your meditation, I implore you not to be in the least troubled thereat, but sometimes open the door to vocal prayers: complain to our Lord, confess your unworthiness, ask him to come to your aid, kiss his image if you have it, say to him these words of Jacob: *I will not let thee go, Lord, except thou bless me* ;\* or those of the woman of Canaan: *Yea, Lord, I am a dog, but the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters*.† At other times, take a book in your hand and read it with attention, until your spirit be awakened and restored within you; sometimes stir up your heart by some posture or movement of exterior devotion, prostrating yourself on the ground, crossing your hands upon your breast, embracing a crucifix; that is, if you are in some private place.

But if after all this you obtain no consolation, be not troubled, however great your dryness may be, but continue to keep yourself in a devout attitude before your God. How many courtiers there are that go a hundred times a year into the prince's presence-chamber without hope of speaking to him, but only to be seen by him and to pay their respects. So also, my dear Philothea, should we come to holy prayer, purely and simply to pay our respects and give proof of our fidelity. If it please the divine Majesty to speak to us and to converse with us by his holy inspirations and interior consolations, it will doubtless be a great honour for us, and a very delightful pleasure; but if it please him not to show us this favour, leaving us there without so much as speaking to us, as though he saw us not and as

\* Gen. xxxii 26.

† Matt. xv 27.

though we were not in his presence, we must not, for all that, depart, but, on the contrary, we must remain there before this sovereign Goodness, with a devout and peaceful mien; and then infallibly will he be pleased with our patience, and will take notice of our diligence and perseverance, so that another time when we come again before him, he will favour us, and will converse with us by his consolations, making us realize the sweetness of holy prayer. But even though he should not do so, let us be satisfied, Philothea, that it is an exceeding great honour for us to be near him and in his presence.

## CHAPTER X

### EXERCISE FOR THE MORNING

BESIDES this complete and formal mental prayer, and the other vocal prayers which you should make once a day, there are five other sorts of shorter prayers, which are, as it were, supplements and offshoots of the other principal prayer; amongst which the first is that which is made in the morning, as a general preparation for all the works of the day. You should make it in this manner:

1. Thank God and adore him profoundly for the favour he has done you in preserving you during the past night; and if, in the course of it, you have committed any sin, ask his pardon for it.

2. Consider that the present day is given you, that in it you may gain the future day of eternity, and make a firm resolution to employ the day well for this intention.

3. Forecast what affairs, what intercourse and what occasions you may meet with during the day to serve God, and what temptations may befall you to offend him, whether by anger or by vanity or by some other inordinate act; and by a holy resolution prepare yourself to make a good use of the means which are

offered you to serve God and further your own devotion; as also, on the other hand, dispose yourself carefully to avoid, resist, and overcome whatever may present itself contrary to your salvation and the glory of God. And it is not enough merely to make this resolution, but you must prepare the means to put it properly into practice. For example, if I foresee that I shall have to treat of some matter with a person who is passionate and quick-tempered, not only will I resolve to refrain from anything that may offend him, but I will prepare mild words to prevent his anger, or I will arrange for someone to be present who can restrain it. If I foresee that I shall want to visit someone who is sick, I will arrange beforehand the time and the consolations and help which I am going to give him; and in like manner with other things.

4. This done, humble yourself before God, acknowledging that of yourself you can do nothing of that which you have deliberated, be it to avoid evil or to do good. And, as if you were holding your heart in your hands, offer it together with all your good intentions to the divine Majesty, imploring him to take it under his protection, and to strengthen it that it may be very successful in his service, making use of these or the like interior words: O Lord, behold this poor and miserable heart which, through thy goodness, has conceived many good affections; but, alas ! it is too feeble and wretched to accomplish the good which it desires, unless thou impart to it thy heavenly blessing, which to this end I crave of thee, O gracious Father, by the merit of the Passion of thy Son, to whose honour I consecrate this day and the rest of my life. Invoke our Lady, your good Angel and the Saints, that they may assist you to this effect.

But all these spiritual actions should be done briefly and fervently, before you leave your room if it be possible; so that, by means of this exercise,

all that you do throughout the day may be watered with the blessing of God; and I beg of you, Philothea, never to fail herein.

## CHAPTER XI

### EXERCISE FOR THE EVENING, AND EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

As before your midday meal you should make a spiritual meal by means of meditation, so before your evening meal you should make a little spiritual meal, or at all events a devout and spiritual collation. Secure, therefore, some time to yourself a little before the evening meal, and, prostrate before God, bringing your spirit, by recollection, close to Jesus Christ crucified (whom you will represent to yourself by a simple consideration, and interior glance) rekindle the fire of the morning's meditation in your heart by a dozen lively aspirations, humiliations and loving movements towards this divine Saviour of your soul; or else by repeating those points of the morning's meditation, in which you found most relish, or by stirring yourself up by means of some new subject, whichever you may prefer.

As to the examination of conscience, which should always be made before going to bed, everyone knows how it should be done.

1. We thank God for having preserved us during the past day.

2. We examine how we have behaved ourselves during all the hours of the day; and in order to do so more easily, we consider where, with whom, and in what we have been employed.

3. If we find that we have done any good, we thank God for it; if, on the other hand, we have done any evil in thought, word, or deed, we ask pardon of his divine Majesty, with a resolution to confess it at the first opportunity and carefully to amend it.

4. After that, we commend to the care of divine Providence our body, our soul, the Church, our relations, our friends; we ask our Lady, our good Angel and the Saints to watch over us and for us; and with God's blessing we proceed to take the repose which he has willed to be necessary for us.

This exercise, like that of the morning, must never be forgotten; for by the morning exercise you open the windows of your soul to the Sun of justice, and by that of the evening you close them against the powers of darkness.

## CHAPTER XII

### OF SPIRITUAL RETIREMENT

IT is here, dear Philothea, that I wish you very earnestly to follow my counsel; for herein lies one of the most assured means of your spiritual advancement.

As often as you can during the day, recall your spirit to the presence of God by one of the four ways which I have pointed out to you; consider what God is doing and what you are doing; you will see his eyes turned towards you, and ever fixed upon you with an incomparable love. O God, you will say, why do not I look upon thee always, as thou always lookest upon me? Why dost thou think of me so often, my Lord, and why do I think so seldom of thee? Where are we, O my soul? Our true place is God, and where is it that we find ourselves?

As the birds have nests on the trees to which they may retire when they feel the need thereof, and as the harts have their bushes and their thickets wherein they hide and shelter themselves, enjoying the cool of the shade in summer; so also, Philothea, our hearts should take and choose some place every day, either upon the mount of Calvary, or within the



wounds of our Lord, or in some other place near him, in order to retire thither on all sorts of occasions, and to be refreshed and recreated there in the midst of exterior occupations, and to be there as in a stronghold, for a defence against temptations. Blessed is the soul that can truly say to our Lord: *Thou art my house of refuge,\* my security, my covert from the rain, and my shade from the heat.†*

Remember then, Philothea, always to make many withdrawals into the solitude of your heart, whilst you are outwardly in the midst of intercourse and business; and this mental solitude cannot be hindered by the multitude of those who are about you, for they are not about your heart, but only about your body, so that your heart may remain all alone in the presence of God alone. This is the exercise which David was wont to practise amidst his many occupations, as he testifies in a thousand places of his psalms, as when he says: *O Lord, I am always with thee.‡ I see my God always before me.§ To thee, O my God, have I lifted up my eyes, who dwellest in heaven.|| My eyes are ever towards the Lord.¶* And, moreover, our occupations are not ordinarily so serious that we may not from time to time withdraw our heart, in order to place it in this divine solitude.

When the father and mother of St Catherine of Siena deprived her of every opportunity of place and of leisure for prayer and meditation, our Lord inspired her to make a small interior oratory in her soul, and by retiring into it spiritually she was able in the midst of her exterior occupations to attend to this holy solitude of the heart. And thus, when the world attacked her, she received no inconvenience therefrom, because, as she used to say, she shut herself up within her interior chamber, where she found consolation with her heavenly Spouse. And

\* Ps. xxx 3.  
‡ Ps. lxxii 23.  
|| Ps. cxxii 1.

† Isaias iv 6.  
§ Ps. xv 8.  
¶ Ps. xxiv 15.



therefore she used afterwards to counsel her spiritual children to make for themselves a chamber in their hearts, and abide there.

Withdraw, then, your spirit from time to time within your heart, where, separated from all men, you may, heart to heart, treat of your soul with God, so as to say with David:\* *I have watched and am become like a pelican in the wilderness ; I am become like an owl in a ruined house, and like a solitary sparrow on the house-top.* Which words, besides their literal sense (which shows that this great King set aside some hours to remain alone in the contemplation of spiritual things), shows us in their mystical sense three excellent retreats, and as it were, three hermitages in which we can practise solitude in imitation of our Saviour, who on Mount Calvary was like a *pelican in the wilderness*, that quickens her dead young ones with her own blood; at his Nativity in a deserted stable he was *like an owl in a ruined house* lamenting and weeping over our faults and sins; and on the day of his Ascension, he was *like a sparrow*, withdrawing himself and flying up to heaven, which is, as it were, the roof of the world; and in all these three places we can make our retreats amid the press of exterior occupations. Blessed Elzear, count of Arian in Provence, having been long absent from his devout and chaste Delphina, she sent a man to him expressly to inquire after his health, and he made answer: "I am very well, my dear wife; but if you desire to see me, seek me in the wound of the side of our sweet Jesus, for there I dwell, and there you will find me; elsewhere you will seek me in vain." He was indeed a Christian knight.

\* Ps. ci 7, 8.

## CHAPTER XIII

OF ASPIRATIONS, EJACULATORY PRAYERS,  
AND GOOD THOUGHTS

WE retire to God because we aspire to him, and we aspire to him in order to retire to him; so that aspiration to God and spiritual retirement mutually support one another, and both proceed from and are born of good thoughts.

Aspire, then, very often to God, Philothea, by short but ardent movements of your heart; admire his beauty, invoke his help, cast yourself in spirit at the foot of the cross, adore his goodness, speak to him frequently about your salvation, give him your heart a thousand times a day, fix your interior eyes upon his sweetness, give your hand to him, as a little child to its father, that he may lead you, put him on your breast as a delicious nosegay, plant him in your soul as a standard, and make a thousand different movements of your heart to give yourself the love of God, and to excite yourself to a passionate and tender love of this divine Spouse.

This is the way to make those ejaculatory prayers which the great St Augustine recommends so insistently to the devout lady Proba. Philothea, our soul giving itself to secret and familiar intercourse with God, will become all perfumed with his perfections; and, moreover, this exercise is not difficult, for it can be interwoven with all our affairs and occupations, without any detriment to them whatsoever; inasmuch as, both in spiritual retirement, and in these interior movements, we only make little and short digressions which do not hinder us in any way, but greatly help us to carry out whatever we are doing. The pilgrim who takes a little wine to rejoice his heart and refresh his mouth, though he makes a short halt for this purpose, does not break off his journey, but gains strength to finish it the more

speedily and easily, for he only halts in order to go on the better.

Many have made collections of vocal aspirations, which are indeed very useful; but, if you will be guided by me, you will not bind yourself to any set form of words, but you will say either with the heart or with the mouth such words as love may suggest to you at the moment; for it will furnish you with as many as you wish. It is true that there are certain words which have a special power to satisfy the heart in this respect, such as are the aspirations sown so thick in the psalms of David, various invocations of the name of Jesus, and the expressions of love which are to be found in the Cantic of Canticles. Spiritual songs are also useful for this purpose provided they be sung with attention.

In fine, as men who are in love with a human and natural love have their thoughts nearly always turned towards their beloved one, their heart full of affection for her, their mouth filled with her praises, and as in her absence they lose no opportunity of showing their love by letters, and meet with no tree upon which they write not the name of the beloved; so those who love God cannot cease to think of him, long for him, aspire to him, and speak of him, and they would be willing, were it possible, to engrave the holy and sacred name of Jesus on the breasts of all persons in the world. And all creatures invite them to this, and there is not any creature which does not announce to them the praise of their Well-Beloved; and, as St Augustine says (taking it from St Antony), everything in the world speaks to them, in mute but very intelligible language, of their love; all things suggest to them good thoughts, from which spring afterwards many movements and aspirations to God. And here are some examples:

St Gregory, Bishop of Nazianzum (as he himself related to his people), walking on the sea-shore,

reflected how the waves advancing over the strand left behind shells and little cornets,\* pieces of sea-weed, little oysters and such-like litter, which the sea cast forth and, as it were, spat out upon the shore; then returning with other waves, it took back and swallowed up again a part of them, whilst the rocks hard by remained firm and immovable, although the waves beat rudely against them. Upon this he made the following beautiful reflections: that the weak, like shells, cornets and pieces of sea-weed, allow themselves to be carried away sometimes by affliction, sometimes by consolation, at the mercy of the waves and billows of fortune, but that the courageous remain firm and immovable in every kind of storm; and this reflection led him to make use of these aspirations of David:† O Lord, *save me, for the waters are come in even unto my soul! O Lord, deliver me out of the deep waters! I am come into the depth of the sea and a tempest hath overwhelmed me.* For at that time he was in affliction because of the unhappy usurpation of his see by Maximus. St Fulgentius, bishop of Ruspe, being present at a general assembly of the Roman nobles, when Theodoric, King of the Goths, made an oration, and beholding the splendour of so many lords, each one ranked according to his quality, said: “O God, how beautiful must the heavenly Jerusalem be, since the earthly Rome here below appears so glorious! And if in this world such splendour is granted to the lovers of vanity, what glory must be reserved in the other world for those who contemplate the truth!”

It is said that St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, whose birth has greatly honoured our mountains, was admirable in this practice of good thoughts. A hare hotly pursued by the hounds ran under the horse of this holy Prelate, who was then on a journey,

\* Shell-fish with horn-shaped shells.

† Ps. lxxviii 2, 15, 3.

as to a place of refuge suggested to it by the imminent danger of death; and the hounds, baying all around, durst not attempt to violate the sanctuary to which their prey had betaken itself—an extraordinary spectacle indeed, which made all the pursuers laugh, whilst the great Anselm, weeping and sighing, said: “Ah! you laugh, but the poor beast does not laugh; the enemies of the soul, who harass and pursue her hither and thither by temptations to all kinds of sins, lie in wait for her at the narrow passage of death in order to catch and devour her; and she, full of fear, seeks everywhere for succour and refuge; and if she cannot find it, they mock and laugh at her.” And when he had said this he went away sighing. Constantine the Great wrote respectfully to St Antony; whereat the religious, who were about him, were greatly astonished, and he said to them: “Why do you wonder that a king should write to a man? Wonder rather that the everlasting God should have written his law to mortal men, nay, more, should have spoken to them mouth to mouth in the person of his Son.” St Francis seeing a sheep all alone in the midst of a flock of goats said to his companion: “See how gentle this poor little sheep is among the goats; so was our Lord meek and humble among the Pharisees.” And on another occasion, seeing a little lamb being devoured by a hog, he exclaimed, weeping: “Alas! little lamb, how vividly dost thou represent the death of my Saviour!”

That great person of our age, Francis Borgia, at that time still Duke of Gandia, when he was going to the chase, was wont to make a thousand devout reflections. “I used to marvel,” he himself said afterwards, “that the falcons return to the fist, and suffer themselves to be hooded and fastened to the perch, and that men are so slow to hear the voice of God.” The great St Basil said that the rose among the thorns addresses this remonstrance to men: “That which is most agreeable in this world, O mortals,



is mingled with sadness; nothing therein is pure; regret is always joined to gladness, widowhood to marriage, care to fruitfulness, ignominy to glory, expense to honours, disgust to delights, and sickness to health. The rose indeed is a beautiful flower, but it gives me great sadness, for it reminds me of my sin, for which the earth has been condemned to bring forth thorns." A devout soul beholding a stream and seeing the heaven with its stars reflected therein on a very still night said: "O my God, these same stars will be beneath my feet, when thou shalt have set me in thy holy tabernacles; and as the stars of heaven are reflected on earth, so the men of the earth are reflected in heaven in the living fountain of divine charity." Another, seeing a river flow by, exclaimed: "My soul will never be at rest till it be plunged within the sea of the Divinity which is its source"; and St Frances, regarding a pleasant stream, upon the bank of which she had knelt down to pray, was rapt into an ecstasy, repeating several times quite softly these words: "The grace of my God flows gently and sweetly like this little stream." Another, seeing the trees in blossom, said with a sigh: "Why am I alone without blossom in the garden of the Church?" Another, seeing some little chickens beneath their mother's wings, said: "O Lord, *protect me under the shadow of thy wings.*"\* Another, seeing the sun-flower, said: "When will it be, my God, that my soul shall follow the attraction of thy goodness?" And seeing some pansies, fair to behold but perfumeless, he said: "Alas! such are my thoughts, beautiful in themselves, but without effect or fruit."

Behold, Philothea, how one may draw good thoughts and holy aspirations from whatever presents itself amid the changes of this mortal life. Unhappy are they who turn creatures away from their Creator to make them turn towards sin; blessed are they who

\* Ps. xvi 8.



turn creatures to the glory of their Creator, and make use of their vanity to the honour of the truth. Indeed, says St Gregory Nazianzen, I am wont to turn all things to my spiritual use. Read the devout eulogy which St Jerome wrote of his St Paula, for it is pleasant to see how it is all strewn with the aspirations and holy thoughts which she was wont to draw from all sorts of occurrences.

Now in this exercise of spiritual retirement and ejaculatory prayers lies the great work of devotion: it can supply the lack of all other prayers, but the failure of this can scarcely be made good by any other means. Without it the contemplative life cannot be properly followed, nor the active life lived otherwise than ill; without it repose is but idleness, and work but embarrassment; and therefore I beseech you to embrace it with your whole heart, and never to abandon it.

## CHAPTER XIV

### OF THE MOST HOLY MASS AND HOW WE OUGHT TO HEAR IT

1. I HAVE not yet said anything to you of the sun of spiritual exercises, which is the most holy, sacred, and supreme Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Mass, the centre of the Christian religion, the heart of devotion, the soul of piety, an ineffable mystery which contains within itself the abyss of divine charity, and by which God, applying himself really to us, communicates to us munificently his graces and favours.

2. Prayer made in union with this divine Sacrifice has an unspeakable force, so that by it the soul abounds with heavenly favours, as it were, *leaning upon her Beloved*,\* who fills her so full of odours and spiritual sweetness, that she resembles a *pillar*

\* Cant. viii 5.

*of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer, as it is said in the Canticle of Canticles.\**

3. Make every effort therefore to assist every day at holy Mass, so that, together with the priest, you may offer the sacrifice of your Redeemer to God his father, for yourself and for the whole Church. The Angels, as St John Chrysostom says, are always present there in great numbers, to honour this holy mystery; and we, being there with them and with the same intention, cannot but receive many favourable influences from such company. The choirs of the Church triumphant and those of the Church militant meet together and are united with our Lord in this divine action, in order that with him, in him, and through him they may ravish the heart of God the Father, and make his mercy all our own. What happiness for a soul devoutly to bring her affections as a contribution towards so precious and desirable a good.

4. If, for some unavoidable reason, you cannot be actually present at the celebration of this supreme Sacrifice, at least let your heart be there, that you may assist at it by a spiritual presence. At some hour, therefore, of the morning, go in spirit to the Church, if you cannot do so in any other way; unite your intention to that of all Christians, and, in the place where you are, perform the same interior actions that you would do, were you really present at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass in some church.

5. Now to hear holy Mass, either actually or spiritually, in a fitting manner: (1) From the beginning until the priest goes up to the altar, make the preparation with him, which consists in placing yourself in the presence of God, acknowledging your unworthiness and asking pardon for your faults. (2) From the time when the priest goes up to the altar to the Gospel, consider with a simple and general

\* Chap. iii 6.

consideration the coming and the life of our Lord in this world. (3) From the Gospel to the *Credo*, consider the preaching of our Saviour; protest that you wish to live and die in the faith and obedience of his holy word, and in union with the holy Catholic Church. (4) From the *Credo* to the *Pater noster* apply your heart to the mysteries of the death and passion of our Redeemer, which are actually and essentially represented in this holy Sacrifice, which, together with the priest and the rest of the people, you will offer to God the Father, for his honour and for your salvation. (5) From the *Pater noster* to the Communion strive to excite a thousand desires of your heart, ardently wishing to be for ever joined and united to your Saviour by everlasting love. (6) From the Communion to the end, thank his divine Majesty for his Incarnation, for his life, for his death, for his passion, and for the love which he shows to us in this holy Sacrifice, conjuring him through it to be ever propitious to you, to your relations, to your friends, and to the whole Church; and, humbling yourself with your whole heart, receive devoutly the divine blessing which our Lord gives you by the ministry of his priest.

But if during Mass you wish to meditate upon the mysteries that you are taking in order day by day, there is no need for you to give them up in order to follow these particular actions; but it will suffice if, at the beginning of Mass, you direct your intention to adore and offer up this holy Sacrifice by means of your meditation and prayer, since in every meditation the aforesaid actions are found, either expressly or tacitly and virtually.

## CHAPTER XV

OF OTHER EXERCISES WHICH ARE PUBLIC  
AND MADE IN COMMON

BESIDES this, Philothea, you should assist at the Office of the Hours and of Vespers on feast days and Sundays, as far as it is convenient for you to do so; for these days are dedicated to God, and therefore we should perform more actions in his honour on those days than on others. By this means you will experience a thousand sweet movements of devotion, as did St Augustine, who testifies in his *Confessions* that, when he assisted at the divine office at the beginning of his conversion, his heart was filled with sweetness, and his eyes with tears of piety. And, moreover (that I may say so once for all), there is ever more good and consolation in the public offices of the Church than in what is done individually, God having so ordained that what is done in common should be preferred to every kind of individual action.

Join readily the confraternities in the place where you dwell, and particularly those the exercises of which bring most fruit and edification; for by doing so you will practise a kind of obedience which is very pleasing to God; and the more so that, though confraternities are not commanded, yet they are recommended by the Church, which, to show that she desires that many should be enrolled therein, gives indulgences and privileges to their members. And besides, it is always a very charitable thing to unite with many and to work with others for the furtherance of their good designs. And although it may happen that one does as good exercises by oneself as are done at the confraternity in common, and that perhaps one may have more relish in doing them by oneself, yet God is more glorified when we

unite and share our good works with our brethren and neighbours.

I say the like of all kinds of public prayers and devotions, to which, as far as is possible to us, we should bring our good example for the edification of our neighbour, and our affection for the glory of God, and the common intention.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THAT WE SHOULD HONOUR AND INVOKE THE SAINTS

SINCE God very often sends us inspirations by his Angels, we also ought frequently to send him our aspirations by the same agency. The holy souls of the dead, who are in Paradise with the Angels, and, as our Saviour says, are *equal to the Angels*\* and like to them, perform also the same office of breathing inspirations within us, and of aspiring for us by their holy prayers. My Philothea, let us join our hearts to these celestial spirits, and blessed souls; as the little nightingales learn to sing in the company of the older ones, so, by sacred intercourse with the Saints, we shall learn better how to pray and sing the divine praises: *I will sing praise to thee*, said David, *in the sight of the angels*.†

Honour, venerate, and respect with a special love the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, who, being the Mother of Jesus Christ, our brother, is also in very truth our Mother. Let us then have recourse to her, and let us, as her little children, cast ourselves into her bosom with perfect confidence; at all times, and on all occasions let us call upon this sweet Mother, let us invoke her maternal love, and whilst striving to imitate her virtues, let us have truly filial hearts in her regard.

Make yourself very familiar with the Angels; see

\* Luke xx 36.

† Ps. cxxxvii 1.

them often invisibly present in your life, and above all, love and revere the angel of the diocese in which you dwell, those of the persons with whom you live, and especially your own; invoke them often, praise them continually, and make use of their help and assistance in all your affairs, whether spiritual or temporal, so that they may co-operate with your intentions.

The great Peter Favre, the first priest, the first preacher, the first lector of theology of the holy company of the name of Jesus, and the first companion of blessed Ignatius its founder, coming one day from Germany where he had done great works for the glory of our Lord, and passing through this diocese, in which he was born, related that while traversing many heretical places, he had received a thousand consolations by saluting the Angel guardian of each parish as he approached it, and that he had been conscious of their help, in that they had protected him from the ambushes of the heretics, and had rendered several souls gentle and docile to receive the doctrines of salvation. And he said this with so much emphasis, that a lady, then young, who had heard it from his own lips, related it with extreme feeling but four years ago, that is to say, more than three score years afterwards. I had the consolation, during the past year, of consecrating an altar in the place where God was pleased that this blessed man should be born, in the little village of Villaret, among our most rugged mountains.

Choose some particular Saints whose lives you can best appreciate and imitate, and in whose intercession you have a special confidence: the Saint whose name you bear has already been assigned to you at your Baptism.



## CHAPTER XVII

HOW WE OUGHT TO HEAR AND READ THE  
WORD OF GOD

BE devout to the word of God: whether you listen to it in familiar conversations with your friends, or at sermons, hear it always with attention and reverence; try to derive profit from it, and do not suffer it to fall to the ground, but receive it into your heart like a precious balm, in imitation of the most holy Virgin, who kept carefully in her heart all the words that were spoken in praise of her Child. And remember that our Lord gathers up the words which we say to him in our prayers according as we gather up those which he says to us by means of preaching.

Have always at hand some good book of devotion, such as those of St Bonaventure, of Gerson, of Denis the Carthusian, of Louis Blosius, of Granada, of Stella, of Pinelli, of da Ponte, of Avila, the *Spiritual Combat*, the *Confessions* of St Augustine, the epistles of St Jerome, and such-like; and read a little of it every day with great devotion, as though you were reading missives sent to you by the Saints from heaven, to show you the way there and give you the courage to walk along it.

Read also the histories and lives of the Saints, in which you will see, as in a mirror, the Christian life portrayed; and adapt their actions to your profit according to your vocation. For though many of the actions of the Saints are not to be imitated in every respect by those living in the world, yet all can be imitated to a greater or lesser extent; the solitude of St Paul, the first hermit, can be imitated in your spiritual and real retreats, of which we shall speak later on, and have already spoken above; the extreme poverty of St Francis, by the practices of poverty which we shall describe, and so of the rest. It is true that there are certain histories which give more

light for the conduct of our lives than others, such as the Life of blessed Mother Teresa, which is admirable for this purpose, the Lives of the first Jesuits, that of St Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, of St Louis, of St Bernard, the *Chronicles of St Francis*, and such-like. There are other Lives wherein there is more to admire than to imitate, such as those of St Mary of Egypt, of St Simeon Stylites, of the two Saints Catherine, of Siena and of Genoa, of St Angela, and of others such, which fail not, however, to give a great relish in general for the holy love of God.

## CHAPTER XVIII

## HOW WE SHOULD RECEIVE INSPIRATIONS

BY inspirations we mean all the interior attractions, movements, reproaches and pangs of remorse, all the lights and rays of knowledge which God causes within us, *preventing* our hearts with his *blessings*,\* through his fatherly care and love, in order to awaken us, to stir us up, to urge and attract us to holy virtues, to heavenly love, to good resolutions, in a word, to all that leads us to our everlasting good. This is what the Beloved calls knocking at the door† and speaking to the heart of his Spouse,‡ awaking her when she sleeps, crying out to her and reclaiming her when she is absent,§ inviting her to eat his honey, and to gather apples and flowers in his garden, to sing and let her sweet voice sound in his ears.||

In order to arrive at a full agreement on a question of marriage, three actions are necessary in regard to the lady whom a man wishes to marry: for first the proposal must be made to her; secondly, she entertains the proposal; and thirdly, she consents.

\* Ps. xx 3.

‡ Isaias xl 2; Osee ii 14.

|| Cant. ii 14.

† Cant. v 2.

§ Cant. ii 10, 13.

So God acts, when he wishes to do in us, through us, and with us, some act of great charity. First, he proposes it to us by his inspiration; secondly, we entertain it; thirdly, we consent to it; for just as there are three downward steps to sin, the temptation, the delectation, and the consent—so also there are three upward steps to virtue—the inspiration, which is the opposite of the temptation; the delectation in the inspiration, which is the opposite of the delectation in the temptation; and the consent to the inspiration, which is the opposite of the consent to the temptation.

If we do not take any pleasure in an inspiration, it might last all our life, and we should not for that reason be in any way pleasing to God; on the contrary, his divine Majesty would be offended with us, as he was with the Israelites, with whom he had been (as he says) *for forty years*,\* urging them to be converted, and who throughout that time paid no heed to him; and therefore *he swore against them in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest.*† So also the suitor who has for a long time wooed a lady would be very displeased if, afterwards, she refused even to entertain his proposal of marriage.

The pleasure which we take in inspirations is a great step to the glory of God, and already we begin to please his divine Majesty thereby; for even though this delectation be not as yet a full consent, nevertheless it is a certain disposition thereto. And if it be a good sign, and a very profitable thing, to take pleasure in hearing the word of God, which is, as it were, an exterior inspiration, it is also a good thing and pleasing to God to take pleasure in interior inspirations; it is this pleasure of which the holy Spouse speaks when she says: *my soul melted with joy when my Well-Beloved spoke.*‡ So also the suitor is already well satisfied with the lady whom he

\* Ps. xciv 10.

† Ps. xciv 11.

‡ Cant. v 6.

woos, and esteems himself favoured when he sees that she takes pleasure in his attentions.

In fine, it is the consent which perfects the virtuous act; for if after receiving the inspiration, and taking pleasure in it, we refuse notwithstanding to give our consent to God, we are extremely ungrateful, and greatly displease his divine Majesty, for there would seem to be more contempt in acting thus. And this is what happened to the spouse; for although the sweet voice of her Well-Beloved touched her heart with a holy joy, yet she opened not the door to him, but made a frivolous excuse; whereat the Beloved being justly displeased went his way and left her.\* So also a suitor, who has for a long time sought a lady in marriage, and whose suit has been favourably entertained, has more reason for discontent if he be in the end rejected and despised, than would be the case if his suit had never been favourably entertained at all.

Resolve, then, Philothea, to accept with a good heart all the inspirations which it may please God to give you; and when they come, receive them as ambassadors of the heavenly King, who wishes to make a contract of marriage with you. Give ear quietly to their proposals; consider the love which has inspired them, and cherish the holy inspiration. Consent to it with a consent which is full, loving, and steadfast; for by this means God, who cannot be under any obligation to you, will hold himself, as it were, under an obligation to your affection. But before giving your consent to inspirations in important or extraordinary matters, in order that you may not be deceived, ask counsel always of your director, so that he may examine whether the inspiration be true or false; because the enemy, seeing a soul prompt to consent to inspirations, very often prepares false ones in order to deceive her; but this he can never do, so long as she obeys her director with humility.

\* Cant. v 6.

When you have given your consent, you must seek with great care to carry the inspiration into effect, for this is the height of true virtue; for to have the consent within the heart, without carrying it into effect, would be like planting a vine without desiring it to bear fruit.

Now what is of wonderful help towards all this is to practise well the morning exercise, and the spiritual retirements, which I have described above; for by these means we prepare ourselves to do what is good, not only in a general manner, but in particular cases.

## CHAPTER XIX

### OF HOLY CONFESSION

OUR Saviour has left to his Church the sacrament of Penance and of Confession, that thereby we may cleanse ourselves from all our sins, as often as we may be defiled with them. Therefore, Philothea, never suffer your heart to be infected with sin for any length of time, since you have so easy a remedy at hand. The lioness that has lain with the leopard goes at once to wash away the stench which she has contracted thereby, so that the lion, when he comes home, may not be displeased and provoked by it; the soul that has consented to sin ought to have a horror of herself, and should cleanse herself as soon as possible, out of respect to the divine Majesty of him whose eyes are upon her. But why should we die a spiritual death seeing that we have so sovereign a remedy?

Go to confession humbly and devoutly once a week, and always, if possible, before you communicate, even though you may not be conscious of any mortal sin; for by confession not only do you receive absolution from the venial sins which you confess, but also a great strength to avoid them hereafter, a clear light to discern them well, and an abundant



grace to repair all the loss which they have caused you. You will practise the virtues of humility, of obedience, of simplicity, and of charity; and in this one act of confession you will exercise more virtue than in any other whatsoever.

Have always a true sorrow for the sins which you confess, however small they may be, with a firm purpose of amendment in the future. Many who confess their venial sins by custom, and as it were by way of routine, without thinking of correcting themselves of them, remain burdened with them all their lives, and lose thereby many spiritual goods and advantages. Therefore if you confess that you have told a lie, though without injury to anyone, or that you have uttered some immoderate word, or that you have played to excess, be sorry for it, and have a firm purpose of amendment; for it is an abuse to confess any kind of sin, be it mortal or venial, without wishing to be cleansed from it, since confession is only instituted for that purpose.

Do not make only those superfluous accusations which many make by routine, such as: I have not loved God as much as I ought; I have not prayed with as much devotion as I ought; I have not loved my neighbour as I ought; I have not received the Sacraments with as much reverence as I ought; and such like: the reason being, that if you say such things, you say nothing definite which may enable the confessor to understand the state of your conscience; for all the saints in Paradise and everyone on earth could say the same things if they went to confession. Consider, therefore, what particular reason you have for making such accusations, and when you have discovered it, accuse yourself quite simply and candidly of the fault which you have committed. For example, you accuse yourself of not having loved your neighbour as you ought; perhaps because having seen some poor person in great need, whom you might easily have helped and



consoled, you omitted to do so. Very well, accuse yourself of this particular thing: Having seen a poor man in necessity, I did not help him as I might have done, through negligence, or through hardness of heart, or through contempt, according to what you know to have been the reason of this fault. In like manner, do not accuse yourself of not having prayed to God with as much devotion as you ought; but if you have had voluntary distractions, or if you have neglected to choose the place, or the time, or the posture requisite for attention in prayer, accuse yourself quite simply of whatever the fault may have been without making a general statement which conveys nothing in confession.

Do not be contented with confessing your venial sins as to the fact, but accuse yourself of the motive which led you to commit them. For example, do not be contented with saying that you have told a lie without injuring anyone, but say whether it were from vainglory in order to praise or excuse yourself, or from idle mirth, or from obstinacy. If you have sinned at play, explain whether it were for the desire of winning, or for the pleasure of the social intercourse, and so of the rest. Say whether you continued a long time in your sin, because ordinarily length of time much increases the sin, there being a great difference between a passing vanity, which has slipped into our soul for a quarter of an hour, and that in which our heart has been steeped for one or two or three days. We must therefore confess the deed, and the motive and the duration of our sins; for though ordinarily we are not bound to be so punctilious in the confession of venial sins, and though we are not absolutely bound to confess them, yet those who wish to purify their souls well in order better to attain to holy devotion, should be careful to give the spiritual physician a clear knowledge of the evil of which they wish to be cured, however small it may be.

Fail not to state whatever may be requisite for the proper understanding of the quality of your offence, as, the reason which you had for giving way to anger, or for bearing with someone in his sin. For example, someone whom I dislike says some light word to me in jest, but I take it in bad part and am angry; whereas if someone whom I like had said something more bitter, I would have taken it in good part. I will not therefore fail to say: I have given way to angry words against a certain person, having taken in bad part something which he said to me, not indeed because of what he actually said, but because of my dislike of him. And if, in order to make your meaning quite clear, it be necessary to repeat the actual words, I think that it would be well to do so; for if we accuse ourselves in this clear manner, we disclose not only the sins which we have committed, but also our evil inclinations, customs, habits, and other roots of sin, and by this means our spiritual Father obtains a better knowledge of the heart which he is treating, and of the most suitable remedies to apply to it. But you must always, as far as is possible, avoid disclosing the identity of anyone else who may have co-operated in your sin.

Take heed of a number of sins, which very often live and flourish insensibly in the conscience, so that you may confess them and be able to cleanse yourself of them; and to this end read carefully Chapters VI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXV, and XXXVI of the Third Part, and Chapter VIII of the Fourth Part.

Do not change your confessor lightly, but, when you have chosen one, continue to render him an account of your conscience on the appointed days, telling him candidly and frankly the sins which you have committed; and from time to time, once a month perhaps, or once in two months, tell him also the state of your inclinations, even though you may not have sinned by them; as, for example, whether

you were troubled with sadness, or with melancholy, or whether you were inclined to joy, to desires of acquiring goods, and similar inclinations.

## CHAPTER XX

### OF FREQUENT COMMUNION

IT is said that Mithridates, King of Pontus, having discovered mithridate, so strengthened his body thereby that afterwards when he tried to poison himself in order to avoid slavery under the Romans, he was not able to do so. The Saviour has instituted the most august Sacrament of the Eucharist, which truly contains his flesh and his blood, *so that he that eateth this bread may live for ever* ;\* whosoever, therefore, makes use of it often with devotion so strengthens the health and the life of his soul, that it is almost impossible for him to be poisoned by any kind of evil affection. We cannot be nourished with this flesh of life, and live with the affections of death; so that, just as men dwelling in the terrestrial paradise were able to avoid bodily death by the virtue of the life-giving fruit which God had placed there, so they are able to avoid spiritual death by the virtue of this Sacrament of life. For if the most tender and corruptible fruits, as cherries, apricots, and strawberries, are easily preserved all the year, if they be conserved in sugar or honey, it is not wonderful that our hearts, though frail and feeble, should be preserved from the corruption of sin, when they are conserved in the sugar and honey of the incorruptible flesh and blood of the Son of God. O Philothea ! the Christians who are damned will be unable to make any reply when the just Judge makes them see how much they are to blame for dying spiritually, since it was so easy for them to maintain themselves in life and in health by eating

\* John vi 52.

his Body which he had left them for this purpose. Unhappy souls, he will say, why did you die, seeing that you had at your command the fruit and the food of life?

“I neither commend, nor do I blame daily reception of the holy Eucharist; but I counsel and exhort everyone to communicate every Sunday, provided that his soul be without affection to sin.” These are the very words of St Augustine, with whom I neither blame nor praise indiscriminately daily communion, but I leave it to the discretion of the spiritual Father of the person who wishes to be enlightened on this point; for as the disposition requisite for such frequent communion must needs be very delicate, it is not good to counsel it indiscriminately; and because this disposition, although delicate, may be found in many good souls, it is not good, on the other hand, to divert or dissuade everyone from it indiscriminately, but the matter should be regulated by the consideration of the interior state of each one individually. It would be imprudent to counsel such frequent communion to all without distinction; but it would also be imprudent to blame anyone for it, and especially if he be following the advice of some worthy director. The answer of St Catherine of Siena was excellent, when, because of her frequent communion, the objection was raised that St Augustine neither praised nor blamed daily communion: “Very well!” she said, “since St Augustine does not blame it, I ask you not to blame it either, and I shall be content.”

But, Philothea, you see that St Augustine exhorts and earnestly counsels persons to communicate every Sunday; do so then, as far as you are able. Since, as I presume, you have no sort of affection to mortal sin, nor any affection to venial sin, you are in the true disposition which St Augustine requires; yea, and in a more excellent one still, for not only have you no affection to committing sin, but you

have not even any affection to sin; so that, should your spiritual Father think it well, you may profitably communicate even more often than every Sunday.

However, many lawful impediments may befall you, not on your own part, but on the part of those with whom you live, which might cause a prudent director to advise you not to communicate so often. For example, if you are in some sort of subjection to others, and if those to whom you owe obedience or reverence are so ill-instructed or so ill-humoured that they are disturbed and troubled at seeing you communicate so often, it might be as well, perhaps, all things considered, to condescend in some sort to their weakness, and to communicate only once a fortnight; but this is to be understood only in case you may not be able by any means to overcome the difficulty. One cannot lay this down as a general rule; you must do what your spiritual Father advises; though I may certainly say that for those who wish to serve God devoutly the longest interval between their communions should be from month to month.

If you are discreet, neither mother nor wife nor husband nor father will hinder you from communicating often; for since on the day of your Communion, you will not neglect to carry out whatever is proper to your condition of life, since you will be more than ordinarily gentle and gracious towards them, and since you will not refuse them any duties whatsoever, it is not likely that they will seek to divert you from this exercise, which will bring them no inconvenience, unless they be of a very froward and unreasonable spirit; in which case, as I have said, perhaps your director will advise you to use some condescension.

I must say just this word to the married: in the ancient Law God disapproved that creditors should exact their debts\* on feast days, but he never disapproved that debtors should pay and render their

\* Deut. xv 1-3.



dues to those who demanded them. It would be unseemly, though no great sin, to demand the payment of the nuptial debt on the day that one has communicated, but it would not be unseemly, nay, rather meritorious, to pay it. Wherefore no one ought to be deprived of Communion, because of the payment of this debt, if otherwise his devotion lead him to desire it. Indeed, in the primitive Church, Christians communicated every day, although they were married, and blessed with generation of children; and for this reason I have said that frequent Communion gives no sort of inconvenience to fathers, or wives, or husbands, provided that the person who communicates be prudent and discreet. As to corporal maladies, there are none which can be a legitimate impediment to this holy participation, save only that which provokes frequent vomiting.

To communicate once a week, it is necessary to be free from mortal sin and to be without affection to venial sin, and to have a great desire to communicate; but to communicate every day, it is also necessary to have conquered the greater part of our evil inclinations, and that it should be by the counsel of our spiritual Father.

## CHAPTER XXI

### HOW WE OUGHT TO COMMUNICATE

BEGIN the evening before to prepare yourself for Holy Communion by many aspirations and movements of love, retiring a little earlier, in order that you may be able to rise earlier next morning. If you should awake during the night fill your heart and your mouth straightway with some fragrant words, by means of which your soul may be perfumed to receive the Beloved, who, watching while you sleep, makes ready to bring you a thousand graces and favours, if on your part you dispose your-



self to receive them. In the morning rise with great joy because of the happiness for which you hope and, having confessed, go with great confidence, but also with great humility, to receive this heavenly food, which nourishes your immortal life. And after you have said the sacred words: *Lord, I am not worthy*,\* do not move your head or your lips any more, but, opening your mouth gently and moderately, and raising your head as much as is needful to enable the priest to see what he is doing, full of faith, hope and charity, receive him, in whom you believe, for whom you hope and whom you love.

O Philothea! consider that as the bee, having gathered from the flowers the dew of heaven and the choicest juice of the earth, and having converted it into honey, carries it into her hive, so the priest, having taken from the altar the Saviour of the world, true Son of God, who like a dew has descended from heaven, and true Son of the Virgin, who like a flower has sprung forth from the earth of our humanity, places him as a delicious food within your mouth and within your body.

Having received him, stir up your heart to come and do homage to this King of salvation; treat with him of the affairs of your soul, behold him within you where he is set for your happiness; in fine, give him as warm a welcome as you can, and conduct yourself in such a way that it may be known by all your actions that God is with you.

But when you cannot have this benefit of communicating actually at holy Mass, communicate at least with your heart and spirit, uniting yourself by an ardent desire to this life-giving flesh of the Saviour.

Your principal intention in communion should be to advance, strengthen and console yourself in the love of God; for you ought to receive for love's sake that which love alone causes to be given to you. No, the Saviour cannot be considered in any

\* Matt. viii 8.

## INTRODUCTION TO DEVOUT LIFE [Pt. 2

action more loving or more tender than that in which he annihilates himself, so to speak, and reduces himself to the form of food in order to enter into our souls, and unite himself intimately to the heart and to the body of his faithful.

If worldlings ask you why you communicate so often, tell them that it is to learn to love God, to be purified from your imperfections, to be delivered from your miseries, to be consoled in your afflictions, and to be strengthened in your weakness. Tell them that two kinds of persons ought to communicate often; the perfect, because being well disposed they would be very wrong in not approaching the source and fount of perfection; and the imperfect, that they may be able justly to aspire to perfection; the strong lest they become feeble, and the feeble that they may become strong; the sick, that they may be cured; those in good health, that they may not fall sick; and that for yourself, being imperfect, feeble and sick, you have need to unite yourself often with him who is your perfection, your strength and your physician. Tell them that those who have not many worldly affairs should communicate often because they have the opportunity to do so, and that those who have many worldly affairs should do likewise because they have need of it, and that he who labours much and is heavily burdened should also eat solid food and oftentimes. Tell them that you receive the blessed Sacrament to learn how to receive it well, because we rarely perform an action well which we do not often practise.

Communicate often, Philothea, yes, as often as you can, with the advice of your spiritual Father: and believe me, the hares on our mountains become white in winter because they neither see nor eat anything but the snow; and by dint of adoring and feeding on beauty, goodness and purity itself in this divine Sacrament, you will become wholly beautiful, wholly good, and wholly pure.

THIRD PART OF THE  
INTRODUCTION

CONTAINING SUNDRY COUNSELS  
CONCERNING THE EXERCISE  
OF VIRTUES





## CHAPTER I

OF THE CHOICE WHICH WE OUGHT TO MAKE  
IN REGARD TO THE EXERCISE OF VIRTUES

THE king of the bees never goes forth to the fields without being surrounded by all his little people, and charity never enters into the heart without bringing with her the whole retinue of the other virtues, exercising them and setting them to work, as a captain does his soldiers; but she does not set them to work all at once, nor all alike, nor at all times, nor in all places. *The just man is like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season,\** because charity, watering a soul, brings forth therein works of virtue, each one in its season. *Music, so pleasant in itself, is out of place in time of mourning,†* says the proverb. It is a great defect in many that, when they undertake the practice of some particular virtue, they insist upon producing acts thereof on all sorts of occasions, and wish, like those ancient philosophers, either always to weep or always to laugh; and they do even worse, when they blame and censure those who do not always practise the same virtues as they do. *Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep,* says the Apostle,‡ and *charity is patient, kind,§* liberal, prudent and condescending.

There are, nevertheless, some virtues which are almost universal in practice, and which ought not only to do their own acts apart, but ought also to diffuse their qualities throughout the actions of all the other virtues. Opportunities seldom present

\* Ps. i 3.

‡ Rom. xii 15.

† Eccclus. xxii 6.

§ 1 Cor. xiii 4.

themselves for the practice of fortitude, magnanimity, magnificence; but gentleness, temperance, modesty, and humility are virtues with which all the actions of our lives should be coloured. There are virtues more excellent than these; but the practice of these is more requisite. Sugar is more excellent than salt; but salt is used more often and more generally. We must, therefore, have a good and ready store of these general virtues since we must make use of them almost continually.

Among the virtues we should prefer that which is most conformable to our duty, and not that which is most conformable to our inclination. St Paula was inclined to practise severe bodily mortifications in order the more readily to enjoy spiritual sweetness, but her duty lay rather in obedience to her superiors; and therefore St Jerome avows that she was to be blamed for practising immoderate austerities against the counsel of her bishop. The Apostles, on the other hand, who had been commissioned to preach the Gospel and distribute the bread of heaven to souls, judged extremely well that it was wrong for them to be hindered in this holy charge by practising the virtue of care for the poor, although this is a very excellent virtue. Every vocation must needs practise some special virtue; distinct in practice are the virtues of a prelate, as are likewise those of a prince, those of a soldier, those of a married woman, and those of a widow; and although all ought to have all the virtues, yet all are not bound to practise them alike, but each one ought to practise in a particular manner those which are requisite to the kind of life to which he is called.

Among the virtues which do not concern our particular duty, we should prefer the most excellent and not the most showy. Comets ordinarily seem to be greater than the stars, and to our eyes take up much more space; but they are not to be compared with the stars either in greatness or in quality, and



they only seem great because they are nearer to us, and of a coarser substance in comparison with the stars. So also there are certain virtues, which, because they are nearer to us, more perceptible, and, if one may say so, more material, are highly esteemed and always preferred by the common run of people: so they commonly prefer temporal almsgiving to spiritual, the hair-shirt, fasting, nakedness, the discipline, and bodily mortifications to gentleness, mildness, modesty, and other mortifications of the heart, which nevertheless are much more excellent. Choose, then, Philothea, the best virtues and not the most esteemed, the most excellent and not the most specious, the best and not the most showy.

It is useful for each one to devote himself to the special practice of some one virtue, not indeed to abandon the rest, but to keep the spirit more exactly ordered and occupied. A beautiful young girl, more resplendent than the sun, royally adorned and attired and crowned with a crown of olives, appeared to St John, bishop of Alexandria, and said to him: "I am the eldest daughter of the King; if thou canst take me for thy friend, I will conduct thee to his presence." He knew that God was recommending to him mercy towards the poor, so that afterwards he gave himself so wholeheartedly to the practice of this virtue, that he became known everywhere as St John the Almoner. Eulogius of Alexandria, desiring to do some particular service to God, and not having enough strength either to embrace the solitary life or to put himself under obedience to another, took into his house an unfortunate man altogether wasted and eaten up with leprosy, in order to exercise charity and mortification in his regard; and that he might do this more worthily, he made a vow to honour, entertain, and serve him as a servant would behave towards his master and lord. Now it came to pass that both the leper and Eulogius were tempted to part the one from the other, and they

addressed themselves accordingly to the great St Antony, who said to them: "Take care, my children, not to part from one another; for, since you are both near your end, if the Angel find you not together, you run a great risk of losing your crowns."

The King St Louis used to visit the hospitals and serve the sick with his own hands, as though he received wages for doing so. St Francis, above all things, loved poverty, which he called his lady; St Dominic loved preaching from which his Order took its name. St Gregory the Great took pleasure in entertaining pilgrims, after the example of the great Abraham, and, like him, he received the King of glory in the form of a pilgrim. Tobias practised charity by burying the dead; St Elizabeth, though a great princess, delighted in nothing so much as in self-abasement; St Catherine of Genoa, when she became a widow, dedicated herself to the service of a hospital. Cassian relates that a devout young lady, desirous of being exercised in the virtue of patience, had recourse to St Athanasius, who, at her request, placed with her a poor widow, peevish, bad-tempered, troublesome and insupportable, who, by constantly scolding this devout girl, gave her occasion enough worthily to practise gentleness and condescension.

So among the servants of God, some make it their aim to serve the sick, others to relieve the poor, others to give little children a better knowledge of Christian doctrine, others to bring back souls that are lost and gone astray, others to adorn churches and deck altars, and others to promote peace and concord among men. Wherein they imitate embroiderers, who upon divers groundworks lay silk, gold and silver, in a variety of beautiful patterns, and so make all sorts of flowers; for in like manner these devout souls, who undertake some particular exercise of devotion, make it serve them as a groundwork for their spiritual embroidery, upon which they

work the various other virtues; by this means, keeping their actions and affections better united and ordered by bringing them into relation with their principal exercise; and thus they show forth their spirit—

In its fair vesture all of gold,  
Decked with adornments manifold.

When we are assailed by some vice, we must, as far as we can, embrace the practice of the contrary virtue, referring the other virtues to this; for by this means we shall overcome our enemy, and shall not fail to make progress in all the other virtues. If I am assailed by pride or by anger, I must in everything incline and bend myself towards the side of humility and gentleness, and I must make any other exercises of prayer, of the Sacraments, of prudence, of constancy, and of sobriety subservient to this end. For, as the wild boars, to sharpen their tusks, whet and polish them with their other teeth, which become in turn all filed and sharpened thereby, so the virtuous man, having undertaken to perfect himself in that virtue of which he has most need for his defence, ought to whet and sharpen it by the exercise of the other virtues, which in turn become more excellent and better polished thereby. So it came to pass in the case of Job, who, by exercising himself particularly in patience against the many temptations by which he was assailed, became perfectly holy and virtuous in all kinds of virtues. And so it has happened, as St Gregory Nazianzen says, that by a single act of some virtue, well and perfectly performed, a person has attained to the height of virtue; citing the case of Rahab, who, having practised exactly the office of hospitality, attained to very great glory; but this is to be understood when such an action is performed excellently, with great fervour and charity.

## CHAPTER II

CONTINUATION OF THE SAME DISCOURSE  
ON THE CHOICE OF VIRTUES

ST AUGUSTINE says excellently, that beginners in devotion commit certain faults, which are blameworthy according to the rigorous application of the laws of perfection, yet are praiseworthy because of the happy presage which they give of a future excellence of piety, to which they serve as a disposition. This base and servile fear, which begets excessive scruples in the souls of those who have but lately forsaken the way of sin, is a commendable virtue in beginners, and a sure presage of future purity of conscience; but this same fear would be blameworthy in those who are far advanced, within whose hearts love should reign, which by little and little drives away this kind of servile fear.

St Bernard was at first full of rigour and severity towards those who put themselves under his guidance, to whom he used to say from the very first that they must forsake the body, and come to him only with the soul. When he heard their confessions he used to blame with extraordinary severity faults of any kind, however small they might be, and used to urge these poor beginners so vehemently towards perfection, that by his very insistence he drew them back from it; for they lost heart and breath at finding themselves urged with such vehemence up so steep and lofty an ascent. You see, Philothea, it was the burning zeal of a perfect purity which provoked this great Saint to adopt this kind of method; and this zeal was a great virtue, but nevertheless reprehensible. And therefore God himself, in a holy vision, corrected him of it, infusing into his soul a gentle, sweet, amiable and tender spirit, by means of which, being wholly changed, he blamed himself very much for having been so exacting and severe, and became

so gracious and condescending to everyone that he *became all things to all men to gain them all*.<sup>\*</sup>

St Jerome having related that St Paula, his dear spiritual daughter, was not only excessive in the practice of bodily mortifications, but so obstinate that she would not pay any attention to the advice given her to the contrary by St Epiphanius her bishop, and that she also allowed herself to be so overwhelmed with grief at the death of her relations and friends, that she was always in danger of death, concludes at length in this wise: "It may be said that instead of writing the praises of this Saint, I am but blaming and reproaching her. I call Jesus to witness, whom she served and whom I desire to serve, that I lie not either on one side or the other, but set down sincerely what is to be said of her, as one Christian of another—that is to say, I write a history of her, not a panegyric, and her failings are the virtues of others." He means by this that the failings and defects of St Paula would be virtues in a less perfect soul, as in truth there are actions which are considered imperfections in such as are perfect, but which nevertheless would be considered great perfections in such as are imperfect. It is a good sign in a sick man when on first recovering from illness, his legs swell, for it shows that nature, already invigorated, is casting out superfluous humours; but it would be a bad sign in one who is not ill, for it would show that nature has not sufficient strength to dissipate and resolve the bodily humours. My Philothea, we must have a good opinion of those whom we see practising virtues, although with imperfection, since even the Saints have often practised them in this manner; but as for us, we must take pains to practise the virtues, not only faithfully, but also prudently, and to this end we should follow carefully the advice of the Wise Man,† *not to lean*

\* 1 Cor. ix 22.

† Prov. iii 5.



*upon our own prudence*, but upon that of those whom God has given us for directors.

There are certain things, which are thought by many to be virtues, but which are by no means such, and of these I must say a word: I mean, ecstasies or raptures, states of insensibility and impassibility, deific unions, transports, transformations, and other such perfections of which certain books treat, which promise to raise the soul up to a purely intellectual contemplation, to an essential application of the spirit, and to a super-eminent life. Note well, Philothea, that these perfections are not virtues. They are rather rewards which God gives for virtue, or, rather, foretastes of the happiness of the life to come, which are sometimes given to men to make them long for the happiness in its fullness, which is to be found in Paradise above. But for all that we should not aspire to such graces, since they are in no way necessary to the true service and love of God, who should be the sole object of our aspirations; and further, these graces are often of such a sort, that they cannot be obtained by our own travail and industry, since they are more in the nature of passive things than active, which we can indeed receive, but not produce in ourselves. I add that we have only undertaken to make ourselves good and devout folk, pious men and women; and therefore we must labour to that end. But if it please God to raise us to these angelic perfections, we shall be also good angels; but in the meantime let us exercise ourselves simply, humbly and devoutly in the little virtues, the conquest of which our Lord has proposed to our care and travail; such as patience, meekness, mortification of the heart, humility, obedience, poverty, chastity, consideration for others, bearing with their imperfections, diligence and holy fervour.

Let us willingly leave the lofty heights to the souls who have been raised so high: we merit not so exalted a rank in the service of God; we shall be only too



happy to serve him in his kitchen and in his pantry: to be his lackeys, porters and chamber-maids; it is for him afterwards, if it seem good to him, to advance us to his cabinet and privy council. Yes, Philothea, for this King of glory does not reward his servants according to the dignity of the offices which they exercise, but according to the love and humility with which they exercise them. Saul, seeking his father's asses, found the kingdom of Israel; Rebecca, watering the camels of Abraham, became the spouse of his son; Ruth, gleaning the ears of corn after the reapers of Booz, and laying herself down at his feet, was drawn to his side and became his wife. Indeed, such high and lofty aspirations to extraordinary things are greatly subject to illusions, deceptions and errors; and it sometimes happens that those who think themselves to be angels, are not even good men, and that in their case there is more grandeur in the words and phrases which they make use of, than in their sentiments and in their actions. However, we must never despise nor censure anything rashly; but whilst blessing God for the super-eminence of others, let us stay humbly in our way, which is lower but safer, less exalted, but more suitable to our insufficiency and littleness, wherein if we remain humbly and faithfully, God will raise us to grandeurs which are great indeed.

### CHAPTER III

#### OF PATIENCE

*PATIENCE is necessary for you that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise, says the Apostle.\* Yes! for, as the Saviour had already said, in your patience you shall possess your souls.†* To possess his soul, Philothea, is the great happiness of man; and the more perfect our patience is, the more perfectly do we possess our souls. Often call to mind that

\* Heb. x 36.

† Luke xxi 19.

our Lord has saved us by suffering and enduring, and that we also must work out our salvation by sufferings and afflictions, enduring injuries, contradictions and troubles with as much sweetness as we can.

Do not limit your patience to such or such kinds of injuries and afflictions, but extend it universally to all those which God may send you and permit to happen to you. There are some who are willing to suffer only those tribulations which are honourable—as, for example, to be wounded in battle, to be prisoners of war, to be ill-treated for religion, to be impoverished by some lawsuit in which they won their case—and these love not the tribulation, but the honour which it brings. He that is patient indeed and a true servant of God bears alike the tribulations which are accompanied with ignominy and those which are honourable. To be despised, reprovèd and accused by the wicked is a pleasure to a man of courage; but when a man is reprovèd, accused and ill-treated by the good, by his friends, by his relations, it is then that goodness is put to the test. I think more of the meekness with which the great St Charles Borromeo for a long time suffered the public rebukes, which a great preacher of a very austere Order uttered against him in the pulpit, than of the patience with which he bore all the attacks which he received from others. For just as the stings of bees are more painful than those of flies, so the evil which we receive at the hands of good men, and the contradictions which they cause, are much harder to bear than the others. And it happens very often, that two good men, having both a good intention, greatly persecute and contradict one another, because of the difference of their opinions.

Be patient, not only in regard to the substance and main part of the afflictions which befall you, but also in regard to the accessories and accidental inconveniences which are attached to them. Many

would be willing to have afflictions provided that they be not inconvenienced by them. I should not mind being reduced to poverty, says one, were it not that it prevents me from helping my friends, from bringing up my children and from living as honourably as I should like to do. And another will say: I should not mind at all, were it not that the world will think that this has happened to me through my own fault. Another would be quite content to be slandered, and would bear it very patiently, provided that no one were to believe the slanderer. There are others who are willing enough to suffer some inconvenience from the evil, but not to have it all: they are not impatient, so they say, because they are ill, but because they have not the money to pay for the requisite attendance, or because those that are about them are inconvenienced thereby. Now I say, Philothea, that we must have patience not only to be ill, but to be ill with the illness which God wills, in the place where he wills, and amongst such persons as he wills; and so of other tribulations.

When some sickness comes upon you, make use of such remedies as are possible and according to God; for to do otherwise would be to tempt his divine Majesty; but when that is done, await with entire resignation such issue as may be pleasing to God. Should it please him that the remedies overcome the sickness, thank him humbly; but should it please him that the sickness overcome the remedies, bless him with patience.

I am of the opinion of St Gregory: when you are justly accused of some fault that you have committed, humble yourself very much, confess that you deserve the accusation which is made against you. But should the accusation be false, excuse yourself meekly, denying your guilt, for you owe this duty to the truth and to the edification of your neighbour; but if, after your true and legitimate excuse, they still continue to accuse you, be not

troubled and do not try to get your excuse accepted; for after you have done your duty to the truth, you ought to do it also to humility. In this way you will neither offend against the care which you ought to have of your good name, nor against the affection which you owe to tranquillity, gentleness of heart and humility.

Complain as little as possible of the wrongs which are done to you; for it is certain that ordinarily he who complains sins, because self-love ever makes us think the injuries greater than they really are; but above all do not complain to such persons as are prone to wax indignant and to think evil. But if it be expedient to make a complaint to someone, either to redress the injury, or to tranquillize your spirit, let it be made to such persons as are peaceable and love God; for otherwise instead of easing your heart they will provoke it to still greater disquietude; instead of removing the thorn which is pricking you, they will drive it deeper into your foot.

Many when they are sick, afflicted, or offended by anyone, refrain from actually complaining and showing weakness, for that, in their opinion (and it is true), would clearly show a great want of strength and of generosity; but they desire extremely, and by divers artifices contrive, that others should sympathize with them, feel great compassion for them, and esteem them not only afflicted but patient and courageous. Now this is indeed patience, but a false patience which is in fact no other thing than a very fastidious and very subtle ambition and vanity: They have *whereof to glory*, says the Apostle,\* *but not before God*. The truly patient man does not complain of his ill, nor does he seek for sympathy; he speaks of it unaffectedly, truthfully and simply, without murmur, without complaint, and without exaggeration: if he be pitied, he patiently suffers himself to be pitied, provided he be not pitied for

\* Rom. iv 2.

some ill which he has not; for then he modestly declares that he suffers no such ill, and in this way he remains peaceful betwixt truth and patience, confessing his ill but not complaining of it.

In the contradictions which will befall you in the exercise of devotion (for these will not be wanting), remember the words of our Lord:\* *A woman when she is in labour hath sorrow, but when she hath brought forth her child she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world*; for you have conceived in your soul the most worthy child in the world—to wit, Jesus Christ—and until he be formed and brought forth you cannot but suffer travail; but be of good heart, for, when these pangs of travail are over, everlasting joy will be yours at having brought forth such a child into the world. Now he will be wholly brought forth by you, when you have formed him entirely in your heart and in your works by the imitation of his life.

When you are sick, offer all your sufferings, pains and weariness to the service of our Lord, and beseech him to join them to the torments which he suffered for you. Obey the physician, take the medicines, food and other remedies for the love of God, remembering the gall which he took for love of us. Desire to be cured, in order to serve him; do not refuse to be sick in order to obey him, and dispose yourself to die, if such should be his will, in order to praise him and enjoy him. Remember that the bees, at the season when they make their honey, live and eat of a very bitter food, and that in like manner we can never perform actions of greater gentleness and patience, nor better produce the honey of excellent virtues, than while we are eating the bread of bitterness, and are living in the midst of afflictions. And as the honey which is made from the flowers of the thyme, a small and bitter herb, is the best of all, so also the virtues which are practised in the bitter-

\* John xvi 21.



ness of the most mean, lowly and abject tribulations, are the most excellent of all.

Look often with your interior eyes upon Jesus Christ crucified, naked, blasphemed, calumniated, abandoned, and in fine overwhelmed with all sorts of troubles, sorrows and afflictions, and consider that all your sufferings are not to be compared with his, either in quality or in quantity, and that you will never suffer anything for him that can be compared with what he has suffered for you. Consider the pains which the martyrs suffered of old, and those which so many persons endure, incomparably more grievous than yours, and say: Alas! my pains are consolations and my thorns roses, when compared with the sufferings of those, who without relief, without assistance, without alleviation, live in a perpetual death, overwhelmed with afflictions infinitely greater than mine.

## CHAPTER IV

### OF HUMILITY FOR THE EXTERIOR

*BORROW*, said Eliseus to a poor widow, and take *empty vessels not a few, and pour oil into them.*\* To receive the grace of God into our hearts, they must be void of our own glory. The kestrel, when it cries and looks on the birds of prey, affrights them by a secret power of its own; therefore the doves love it above all other birds, and live in security near to it: so humility repels Satan, and preserves in us the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and therefore all the Saints, but particularly the King of Saints and his Mother, have always honoured and cherished this virtue more than any other of the moral virtues.

We call that glory vain which we give to ourselves, either for that which is not in us, or for that which is in us but is not ours, or for that which is in us

\* 4 Kings iv 3, 4.



and is ours, but does not deserve that we should glory in it. Nobility of race, the favour of the great, and popular esteem are things which are not in us, but either in our predecessors, or in the esteem of other men. There are some who become proud and haughty because they are on a good horse, because they have a plume in their hat, because they are richly attired; but who does not see the folly of this? For if there be any glory at all in these things, it is for the horse, for the bird and for the tailor; and what a meanness of spirit it is to borrow the estimation in which one is held from a horse, or from a feather, or from a garment. Others esteem and value themselves for their curled moustaches, for a well-trimmed beard, for crisped tresses, for soft hands, or because they can dance or play or sing; but are they not mean-spirited in wishing to enhance their value and increase their reputation by such frivolous and foolish things? Others wish to be honoured and respected by the world for a little knowledge as though everyone ought to be their pupils, and look upon them as their masters; and therefore they are called pedants. Others are vain of their beauty, and imagine that all the world pays court to them. All this is extremely vain, foolish and frivolous.

That which is truly good is known in the same way as the true balm: balm is tested by dropping it into water, for if it goes to the bottom and takes the lowest place, it is judged to be the finest and the most precious. Even so, to know whether a man be truly wise, learned, generous, noble, we must see if the good things in him tend to humility, modesty and submission, for then they will be truly good; but if they float on the surface, and seek to appear, then, the more conspicuous they are, the less will they be truly good.

The pearls that are conceived or nourished in the wind and in the noise of thunder have only the out-

side covering of pearl, and are void of substance; and so the virtues and good qualities of men which are received and nourished in pride, in boasting and in vanity have only an appearance of good, without sap, without marrow and without solidity.

Honours, high station and dignities are like the saffron, which prospers better and grows more abundantly when it is trampled under foot. It is no longer an honour to be beautiful, when a person esteems himself on this account; beauty, to have real charm, should be unaffected; knowledge discredits us when it puffs us up and degenerates into pedantry. If we are punctilious in regard to rank, to precedence, to titles, we not only expose our qualities to question, to examination and to contradiction, but we make them mean and contemptible; for the honour which is beautiful when received as a gift, loses its beauty when it is exacted, sought after and demanded. When the peacock spreads its tail for display, in raising up its beautiful feathers it is ruffled up over all the rest of its body, and exposes its ugly parts to view on either side; flowers which are beautiful when planted in the soil, wither away when handled. And as those who smell the mandrake from afar and only for a short time perceive a sweet odour, but those who smell it close at hand and for a long time become stupefied and sick, so honours are a source of sweet consolation to him who inhales their odour from afar and in a passing manner, without setting great store on them or being eager for them; but they are blameworthy and contemptible when a person sets his affection upon them and delights in them.

The pursuit and love of virtue begins to make us virtuous; but the pursuit and love of honours begins to make us contemptible and blameworthy. The well-born do not trouble themselves about these little trifles of rank, of honours, and of salutations; they have other things to do; it is a mark of degenerate

spirits. He that can have pearls does not burden himself with shells; and they that aspire to virtue are not eager for honours. Everyone, indeed, may take the rank due to him and keep it without prejudice to humility, provided that it be done unaffectedly and without contention. For as they that come from Peru, besides the gold and silver which they take from there, bring also monkeys and parrots, because these cost them scarcely anything, and are not burdensome to their ship; so they that aspire to virtue neglect not to take the rank and the honours which are due to them, provided that it cost them not much care and attention, and that they be not burdened with trouble, with disquietude, with disputes and contentions. I speak not, however, of those whose dignity is a matter of public concern, nor of certain particular occasions, which are of great consequence; for in that case each one should keep what belongs to him, with prudence and discretion, accompanied with charity and courtesy.

## CHAPTER V

### OF HUMILITY WHICH IS MORE INTERIOR

BUT you desire, Philothea, that I should lead you farther in humility; for to do what I have so far said is rather wisdom than humility; and therefore I will now pass on farther. Many will not or dare not think of and consider the graces which God has bestowed upon them personally, for fear of vain-glory and self-complacency, in which they certainly deceive themselves; for since, as the great Angelic Doctor says, the true means of attaining to the love of God is the consideration of his benefits, the more we know them, the more we shall love him; and as the benefits bestowed upon us personally, move us more powerfully than those which are common to all, so ought they to be considered more attentively.

Certainly, nothing can so much humble us before the mercy of God as the multitude of his benefits, nor can anything so much humble us before his justice as the multitude of our misdeeds. Let us consider what he has done for us, and what we have done against him; and as we consider our sins in detail, let us consider also his graces in detail. We need not fear that the knowledge of what he has placed in us will puff us up, provided that we are attentive to this truth, that what is good in us is not of ourselves. Alas! do mules cease to be clumsy and malodorous beasts because they are laden with the precious and perfumed goods of the prince? What have we of good that we have not received? And if we have received it, why should we pride ourselves upon it? On the contrary, the lively consideration of the graces, which we have received, makes us humble; for knowledge begets acknowledgement. But if, in considering the graces which God has given us, any sort of vanity should be stirred up, the infallible remedy will be to have recourse to the consideration of our ingratitude, of our imperfections and of our miseries: if we consider what we have done when God has not been with us, we shall realize clearly that what we do when he is with us, is not of our own doing, nor of our own thinking. We shall indeed possess the good, and we shall rejoice because we possess it, but we shall give the glory to God alone, because he is the author of it. Thus the blessed Virgin confesses that God has done great things to her, but it is only to humble herself and magnify God: *My soul, she says, doth magnify the Lord, because he hath done great things to me.*\*

We say many a time that we are nothing, that we are misery itself and the very off-scouring of the world; but we should be very annoyed were we taken at our word and proclaimed to be what we say. On the contrary, we make a pretence of running away

\* Luke i 46, 49.

and hiding ourselves, in order that men may run after us and seek us; we make a show of wishing to be the last and seated at the lower end of the table, but we only do so in order to pass more advantageously to the top. True humility makes no pretence of being humble, and scarcely ever utters words of humility, for it desires not only to hide the other virtues, but also and principally it seeks to hide itself; and if it were lawful to lie, to dissemble, or to scandalize one's neighbour, it would produce actions of arrogance and pride in order to conceal itself under these and live altogether unknown and hidden.

My advice, therefore, is this, Philothea: either let us refrain from speaking words of humility, or let us say them with a true interior sentiment conformable to what we pronounce outwardly; let us never lower our eyes without humbling our hearts; let us not make a show of wishing to be the last, unless in our hearts we wish to be such. Now I hold this rule to be so universal that I allow no exceptions to it. I would only add that civility requires that we should sometimes offer precedence to those who will certainly refuse it, and this is neither duplicity nor false humility; for in this case the offer of precedence is in itself an incipient honour, and as we cannot give them the honour in its entirety, we do no ill in giving them the beginning thereof. I say the same in regard to certain words of honour or of respect, which, strictly speaking, do not seem sincere; yet they are true enough, provided that the heart of him who pronounces them has a true intention of honouring and respecting the person to whom he says them; for although the words signify with some little excess what we would say, we do no ill in making use of them, when common custom requires it. But even so, I would prefer that our words should correspond with our affections as nearly as possible, in order to follow in everything and on all occasions simplicity and candour of heart. The truly humble man



would prefer another to say of him that he is miserable, that he is nothing, that he is of no worth, than to say it himself; at least, if he knows that this is said of him, he does not contradict it, but heartily acquiesces in it; for since he firmly believes it himself, he is glad that others should be of the same opinion.

Many say that they leave mental prayer to the perfect, and that they are not worthy to practise it; others protest that they dare not communicate often, because they do not think themselves pure enough; others, that they fear to disgrace devotion if they meddle with it, because of their great misery and weakness; and others refuse to employ their talents in the service of God and of their neighbour, because, so they say, they know their feebleness and are afraid of becoming proud, if they are instruments of any good, and of being consumed themselves, whilst they are enlightening others. All this is but artifice, and a kind of humility which is not only false but evil, whereby they seek tacitly and subtly to find fault with the things of God, or at all events to conceal, under a pretext of humility, the love of their own opinion, of their own inclination, and of their own slothfulness. *Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God either unto the height of heaven above, or unto the depth of the sea below*, said the prophet to the unhappy Achaz, and he replied: *No, I will not ask and I will not tempt the Lord.*\* O the wretched man! he makes a pretence of showing great reverence to God, and under colour of humility he excuses himself from aspiring to the grace to which the divine Goodness invites him. But does he not see, that when God wishes to bestow some favour upon us, it is pride to refuse? that the gifts of God oblige us to receive them, and that it is humility to obey and follow, as closely as we can, his desires? Now the desire of God is that we should be *perfect*,†

\* Isa. vii 11, 12.

† Matt. v 8.



uniting ourselves to him, and imitating him as closely as we can. The proud man who trusts in himself has indeed a good reason for not daring to undertake anything; but the more a humble man realizes his own weakness, the more courageous he becomes; and the more wretched he esteems himself to be, the bolder he becomes, because he places all his confidence in God, who is pleased to magnify his almighty power in our infirmity, and to manifest his mercy in our misery. We must therefore with humble and holy confidence dare all that is judged proper to our progress by those who guide our souls.

To think that we know what we do not know is clear folly; to wish to appear learned when we are well aware that we are ignorant of the subject, is intolerable vanity: for my part, even if I had a knowledge of the subject, I would not wish to appear learned; nor, on the other hand, would I wish to appear ignorant.

When charity requires it, we must freely and gently impart to our neighbour not only what is necessary for his instruction, but also what is useful for his consolation; for humility, which hides and covers virtues in order to preserve them, causes them nevertheless to appear at charity's command, in order to develop, increase and perfect them. Wherein it resembles that tree in the island of Tylus, which at night shuts up its beautiful red flowers and keeps them closed and only opens them again at sunrise, so that the inhabitants of the country say that these flowers sleep at night. For so humility covers and hides all our virtues and human perfections, and never allows them to appear except for the sake of charity, which, being a virtue not human but celestial, not natural but supernatural, is the true sun of the virtues, over which it ought always to rule; so that a humility which is prejudicial to charity is undoubtedly false.

I have no wish either to play the fool or to play

the wise man; for if humility prevents me from playing the wise man, simplicity and sincerity will likewise prevent me from playing the fool; and if vanity is contrary to humility, artifice, affectation and dissimulation are contrary to sincerity and simplicity. And if some great servants of God have pretended to be fools in order to render themselves more abject in the eyes of the world, we should admire them but not imitate them; for they have had motives for proceeding to this excess, which have been so personal and extraordinary that no one ought to draw any conclusion therefrom for himself. And as to David, if he danced and leaped a little more than ordinary propriety required before the Ark of the covenant, it was not that he wished to play the fool, but quite simply and unaffectedly he made use of these exterior movements conformably to the extraordinary and unbounded gladness which he felt in his heart. It is true that when Michol his wife reproached him for it as for an act of folly, he was not troubled at seeing himself despised: but persevering in his unaffected and sincere display of joy, he testified that he was glad to incur some reproach for the sake of his God. And consequently I tell you, that, if you be considered mean, abject or foolish for acts of true and unaffected devotion, humility will make you rejoice at this happy contempt, the cause of which is not in yourself but in those who condemn you.

## CHAPTER VI

### THAT HUMILITY MAKES US LOVE OUR OWN ABJECTION

I PROCEED farther and tell you, Philothea, that in everything you should love your own abjection. But, you will say to me, what does this mean, "love your own abjection"? In Latin abjection means humility, and humility means abjection; so that,

when our Lady in her holy Canticle says, *because thou hast regarded the humility of thy handmaid, all generations shall call me blessed*, she means to say that our Lord has looked favourably upon her abjection, insignificance and lowliness, in order to load her with graces and favours. However, there is a difference between the virtue of humility and abjection; for abjection is the littleness, lowliness and insignificance that is in us, without our thinking of it; but as to the virtue of humility, it is the true knowledge and voluntary acknowledgement of our abjection. Now the highest point of this humility is not only voluntarily to acknowledge our abjection, but to love it and take pleasure in it, not from any lack of courage and generosity, but to exalt so much the more the divine Majesty and to esteem our neighbour the more in comparison with ourselves. And it is this to which I exhort you; and in order that I may make myself better understood, know that amongst the evils which we suffer, some are abject and others honourable; many put up with the honourable, but scarcely anyone is willing to put up with the abject. Look at that devout hermit in rags and starved with cold; everybody honours his torn habit, and has compassion on his suffering; but if a poor artisan, a poor gentleman or a poor gentlewoman be in the same state they are despised and laughed at, and thus their poverty is abject. A religious suffers patiently a harsh rebuke from his superior, or a child from his father; and everybody calls this mortification, obedience and wisdom; but let a gentleman or lady suffer the like from another, and, although it be for the love of God, it will be called cowardice, and want of spirit: this is another example of an abject ill. One man has an ulcer on his arm, another on his face: the former has only the evil, but the latter, in addition to the evil, has the contempt, the disdain and the abjection. Now I say that we must not only love the evil, which is

done by the virtue of patience; but we must also love the abjection, which is done by the virtue of humility.

Moreover, there are abject virtues and honourable virtues; patience, gentleness, simplicity and humility are virtues which worldlings consider mean and abject; on the contrary, they think highly of prudence, valour and liberality. There are also actions of one virtue, of which some are despised, and others considered honourable; to give alms and forgive injuries are two actions of charity: the first is considered honourable by everyone, but the other is considered contemptible in the eyes of the world. A young man or a young woman who will not fall in with the excesses of a dissolute company, in regard to conversation, play, dancing, drinking and dress will be mocked and criticised by the others, and their modesty will be called either bigotry or affectation: to love this is to love one's abjection. Here is another example of a different kind: we are going to visit the sick; if I am sent to the most miserable, it will be an abjection for me according to the world, and therefore I will love it; if I am sent to persons of consequence, it is an abjection according to the spirit, for there is not so much virtue or merit therein, and therefore I will love this abjection. If I fall down in the middle of the street, besides the fall I am also put to shame; I must love this abjection. There are even faults in which there is no evil at all except the abjection; and humility does not require that we should commit them purposely, but it does require that we should not be disturbed when we have committed them: such are certain follies, incivilities and inadvertencies, which we should try to avoid before they are committed for the sake of civility and prudence, but when they have been committed, we should acquiesce in the abjection that comes to us from them, and accept it willingly for the sake of humility. I say yet more; if I have been

led by anger or by want of restraint to say some unseemly words, by which God and my neighbour are offended, I will repent heartily and will be extremely sorry for the offence and I will endeavour to make reparation for it as far as I can; but I will not fail to accept the abjection and the contempt which it brings upon me; and if it were possible to separate the one from the other, I would hasten to cast away the sin, and I would humbly retain the abjection.

But though we love the abjection which follows from the evil, yet we must not neglect to remedy the evil which has caused it, by proper and legitimate means, and especially when the evil is serious. If I have some ugly sore on my face, I will seek to cure it, but I will not seek that others should forget the abjection which I have received from it. If I have done something which offends no one, I will not excuse myself for it, for although it may be a defect, yet it has not a lasting effect; and therefore I could only excuse myself for the abjection which it brings me; and it is this which humility cannot permit. But if by inadvertence or by stupidity I have offended or scandalized someone, I will repair the offence by some genuine excuse, more especially as the evil effect continues, and as charity obliges me to efface it. For the rest, it sometimes happens that charity requires us to remedy the abjection for the good of our neighbour, to whom our good name is necessary; but in that case, whilst we remove the abjection from before the eyes of our neighbour, that he may not be scandalized, we must shut it up and hide it within our heart for his edification.

But you wish to know, Philothea, which are the best abjections; and I tell you plainly that the most profitable to the soul, and the most pleasing in the eyes of God, are those which come to us accidentally or by our condition of life, because we have not chosen them ourselves, but have received them as they



have been sent to us by God, whose choice is always better than our own. But if we are to choose, the greatest are the best; and those are esteemed the greatest which are the most contrary to our inclinations, provided that they be conformable to our vocation; for, to say it once for all, our choice and election spoils and lessens almost all our virtues. Ah ! who will give us the grace to be able to say with the great King:\* *I have chosen to be an abject in the house of God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.* No one can do it, dear Philothea, but he who, to exalt us, so lived and died that he was the *reproach of men and an abject among the people.*†

I have said many things to you which will seem hard to you when you consider them; but, believe me, they will be sweeter than sugar and honey when you put them into practice.

## CHAPTER VII

### HOW WE SHOULD PRESERVE OUR GOOD NAME WHILE PRACTISING HUMILITY

PRaise, honour and glory are not given to men for ordinary virtue but for eminent virtue. For by praise we wish to persuade others to appreciate the excellence of someone; by honour we proclaim that we ourselves hold him in esteem. And glory is no other thing in my opinion than a certain lustre of reputation which shines forth from the union of several praises and honours; so that honours and praises are like precious stones, which when collected together show forth a lustre like that of an enamel. Now since humility cannot permit us to have any desire of excelling or of being preferred to others, it cannot permit us to seek for praise, honour or glory, which are due to excellence alone. Yet humility readily falls in with the counsel of the Wise Man

\* Ps. lxxxiii 11.

† Ps. xxi 7.



who admonishes us to *take care of a good name*,\* because a good name is an esteem, not of some excellence, but only of a plain and ordinary uprightness and integrity of life; and humility does not prevent us from recognizing this in ourselves, nor in consequence from desiring the reputation for such. It is true that humility would despise a good name, if charity had no need thereof; but because it is one of the foundations of human society, and because without it we are not only useless but hurtful to society, by reason of the scandal which it receives thereby, charity requires and humility assents, that we should desire a good name and carefully preserve it.

Besides this, as the leaves of the trees, which in themselves are of no great value, serve nevertheless a very useful purpose, because they not only beautify the trees, but also preserve the fruit while it is yet tender; so also a good name, which in itself is not a thing much to be desired, is nevertheless very useful not only as an embellishment of our lives, but also for the preservation of our virtues, and especially of virtues which are yet tender and feeble. The obligation of keeping our good name, and of being such as we are esteemed to be, urges on a generous spirit with a powerful and sweet violence. Let us preserve our virtues, Philothea, because they are pleasing to God, who is the chief and supreme object of all our actions; but as those who wish to keep fruits are not content to preserve them with sugar, but place them in jars which are suited to the purpose, so, though divine love is the principal preservative of our virtues, yet we can also make use of our good name as being very proper and useful to that purpose.

We must not, however, be too eager, exacting and punctilious in preserving it; for those who are so touchy and sensitive about their good name, resemble

\* Ecclus. xli 15.

those who take medicine for every little ailment; for, thinking to preserve their health, they utterly ruin it; and in like manner those who are so sensitive about keeping their good name, lose it entirely; for by this touchiness they become capricious, obstinate and unbearable, and provoke the ill-will of slanderers.

Disregard and contempt of injury and calumny is ordinarily a far better remedy than resentment, wrangling and vengeance: contempt causes them to disappear; if we resent them, we seem to avow them. Crocodiles hurt none but those who fear them; and slander hurts none but those who trouble themselves about it.

Excessive fear of losing a good name indicates a great distrust of its foundation, which is the truth of a good life. Towns that have wooden bridges over great rivers fear lest they be carried away by any kind of flood; but those which have bridges of stone are only anxious about extraordinary inundations; so those that have a soul solidly grounded in Christian virtue ordinarily despise the overflowings of injurious tongues; but those that feel themselves weak are disquieted at every turn. Indeed, Philothea, he that wishes to have a good name with all, loses it with all; and he that wishes to have honour with those whose vices make them truly infamous and dishonourable, deserves to lose it.

Reputation is but a sign-board to show where virtue lodges; virtue, then, should be preferred in every way. Therefore, if they say: you are a hypocrite, because you give yourself to devotion; if they hold you for a man of mean spirit because you have pardoned an injury, laugh at all that. For, not only are such statements made by silly and foolish persons, but even though we were to lose our good name, we should not on that account forsake virtue nor turn aside from its path, because we should prefer the fruit to the leaves, that is to say, interior and spiritual good, to all exterior goods. We should

be jealous, but not worshippers of our good name; and as we should not offend the eyes of the good, so also we should not wish to satisfy those of the wicked. The beard is an ornament on the face of a man, and the hair on the head of a woman; if the beard be plucked forth by the root from the chin, and the hair from the head, with difficulty will it ever be able to grow again; but if it be only cut, or rather shaved, it will soon grow again, and will become stronger and thicker than before. So, although our good name be cut away, or even shaved away altogether by the tongue of slanderers, which, as David says, is *like a sharp razor*,\* we should not be disquieted, for soon it will spring up again, and will be not only as beautiful as before, but even more solidly established. But if our vices, our baseness, our evil life take away our good name from us, it will be more difficult than ever for it to spring up again, because it has been torn up by the root. For the root of a good name is goodness and probity, and so long as this root remains in us, it can always regain the honour which is due to it.

We must give up this idle intercourse, this useless practice, this frivolous friendship, this foolish intimacy, if it be injurious to our good name, for a good name is worth more than empty satisfactions of any kind; but if we are blamed, chided, calumniated for practising piety, for advancing in devotion and for progressing towards our eternal good, let us leave these curs to bay at the moon; for if they are able to stir up a bad opinion against our reputation, and thus cut and shave the hair and the beard of our good name, it will soon grow again, and the razor of slander will help our honour, as the pruning-knife helps the vine, to abound and multiply in fruit.

Let us ever fix our eyes on Jesus Christ crucified; let us walk in his service with confidence and simplicity; yet wisely and discreetly; he will be the

\* Ps. li 2.

protector of our good name, and if he suffer it to be taken away from us, it will be to give us a better one, or to make us progress in holy humility, an ounce of which is worth more than a thousand pounds of honour. If we are blamed unjustly, let us peaceably set forth the truth against the calumny; if the calumny perseveres, let us persevere in humility; for by thus resigning our reputation, together with our soul, into the hands of God, we cannot secure it better. Let us serve God *through evil report and good report*,\* after the example of St Paul, so that we may be able to say with David: *O my God, for thy sake I have borne reproach: shame hath covered my face.*† I except, however, certain crimes so atrocious and infamous that no one ought to suffer the false imputation of them, if he can justly clear himself; and certain persons, upon whose good reputation depends the edification of many; for in this case we must tranquilly seek the reparation of the wrong received, according to the opinion of theologians.

## CHAPTER VIII

OF GENTLENESS TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR  
AND HOW TO REMEDY ANGER

THE holy chrism, which by apostolic tradition is used in the Church of God for confirmations and consecrations, is composed of olive oil mingled with balm; and, amongst other things, represents the two dear and beloved virtues which shone forth in the sacred Person of our Lord, and which he has particularly recommended to us, as though by them our hearts ought to be specially consecrated to his service and applied to his imitation: *Learn of me*, he said, *for I am meek and humble of heart.*‡ Humility perfects us in regard to God, and gentleness in regard to our neighbour. The balm, which, as I

\* 2 Cor. vi 8.

† Ps. lxxviii 8.

‡ Matt. xi 29.

have said above, always sinks to the bottom in all liquids, represents humility; and the olive oil, which always floats on the top, represents gentleness which rises above all things and is pre-eminent among the virtues, as being the flower of charity, which, according to St Bernard, is in its perfection, when it is not only patient, but also gentle and meek. But take care, Philothea, that this mystical chrism compounded of gentleness and humility be within your heart; for it is one of the great artifices of the enemy to cause many to busy themselves with the words and outward appearance of these two virtues, who, not examining carefully their interior affections, imagine themselves to be humble and gentle, whereas in reality they are by no means such; and this may be discovered because, for all their ceremonious gentleness and humility, at the least word which is said to thwart them, at the least petty injury which they receive, they start up with the greatest arrogance. It is said that those who have taken the antidote which is commonly called the grace of St. Paul swell not at all when bitten and stung by a viper, provided that the "grace" be of good quality: in like manner, when humility and gentleness are good and true, they preserve us from the swelling and heat which injuries are wont to provoke in our hearts. But if, when stung and bitten by slanderers and enemies, we become proud, puffed up and angry, it is a sign that our humility and gentleness are not true and sincere, but artificial and specious.

When the holy and illustrious patriarch Joseph sent back his brethren from Egypt to the house of his father, he gave them but this one counsel: *Do not be angry in the way.*\* I say the same to you, Philothea: this miserable life is only a journey to the happy one; do not let us therefore be angry with one another in the way, but let us journey onwards with our brethren and companions, gently, peace-

\* Gen. xlv 24.



ably and amiably. And I say to you clearly and unequivocally: If you can possibly help it, do not be angry at all, and do not admit any pretext whatsoever for opening the door of your heart to anger, for St James says quite shortly and without reserve that *the anger of man worketh not the justice of God*.\*

We must indeed perseveringly and courageously resist the evil and repress the vices of those who are in our charge, but we must do it gently and peaceably. Nothing appeases an enraged elephant so much as the sight of a little lamb, and nothing breaks the force of cannon-balls so well as wool. A reprimand, even though it be reasonable, when given in anger is not received so well as that which has no other motive than reason alone; for the rational soul, being subject to reason by its very nature, is only subject to passion tyrannically; and therefore, when reason is accompanied by passion, it becomes odious, its just dominion being debased by its association with tyranny. Princes greatly honour and console their people when they visit them with a peaceful retinue; but when they bring armies with them, even though it be for the public good, their visits are always unwelcome and hurtful, because, although they may cause military discipline to be strictly observed among the soldiers, yet, do what they may, there is always some disorder by which the civilian is oppressed. Even so, as long as reason rules and peaceably inflicts chastisements, corrections and rebukes, though rigorously and exactly, everyone loves her and approves her; but when she brings with her ire, anger and wrath, which are, as St Augustine says, her soldiers, she makes herself more terrible than lovable, and her own heart always remains oppressed and ill-treated thereby. "It is better," says the same St Augustine, writing to Profuturus, "to deny admittance to just and equitable anger, than to admit it, however slight it may be, because,

\* Chap. i 20.



once admitted, it is difficult to make it depart; for it enters like a little shoot and in less than no time it grows and becomes a beam." And if it can but once gain the night, the sun going down upon our wrath (which the Apostle forbids), it becomes converted into hatred, and there is then scarcely any means to be freed from it; for it nourishes itself with a thousand false pretexts, since no wrathful man ever thinks his wrath unjust.

It is better, then, to undertake to try to live without anger than to seek to make a moderate and wise use of anger, and when, through imperfection and weakness, we find ourselves surprised by it, it is better to repel it promptly than to seek to come to terms with it; for if we give it the slightest opportunity, it makes itself mistress of the place, and acts like the serpent, which draws its body easily through any aperture into which it can insert its head. But you will say to me, how am I to repel it? My Philothea, at the first movement of anger which you experience, you must promptly collect your forces, not roughly nor impetuously, but gently and yet seriously, for as it often happens in the sittings of senates and parliaments, that the ushers crying out "silence," make more noise than those whom they command to be silent, so also it often happens that when we wish impetuously to repress our anger, we cause a greater disturbance in our heart than before, and when the heart is thus troubled, it cannot any longer be master of itself.

After this gentle effort, practise the advice which St Augustine, when an old man, gave to the young Bishop Auxilius: "Do," said he, "what a man should do; and if that befall thee which befell the man of God spoken of in the Psalm: *Mine eye is troubled with wrath*, have recourse to God, crying out: *Have mercy upon me, O Lord*,\* so that he may stretch forth his right hand to repress thy wrath."

\* Ps. xxx 10.

I mean, that we must invoke the help of God, when we see ourselves troubled by anger, in imitation of the Apostles when they were tossed by the wind and the storm in the midst of the waters; for he will command our passions to be still, and there will be a great calm. But I would always have you remember that the prayer which is made against anger, when it is present and pressing us, must be made gently, tranquilly, without any violence; and this must be observed in all the remedies which we employ against this evil. Moreover, as soon as you perceive that you have committed some act of anger, repair the fault by a prompt act of gentleness, towards the same person with whom you have been irritated. For just as it is a sovereign remedy against lying to unsay the lie on the spot, as soon as we are aware of having said it, so also it is a good remedy against anger to repair it at once by a contrary act of gentleness; for, as they say, fresh wounds are more easily cured.

In addition to which, when you are in tranquillity and without any occasion of anger, lay up a great store of gentleness and meekness, speaking all your words, and performing all your actions, whether little or great, as gently as you possibly can, being mindful that the Spouse in the *Canticle of Canticles*\* has not only the *honey* on her *lips* and at the end of her tongue, but also *under the tongue*—that is to say, in her breast; and not only is there honey there, but also *milk*; for not only must our words be sweet in regard to our neighbour, but also our whole breast—that is to say, all the interior of our soul. And we must have not only the sweetness of honey, which is aromatic and fragrant—that is to say, the sweetness of courteous intercourse with strangers—but also the sweetness of milk among the members of our household, and near neighbours, wherein they greatly fail who seem angels when they are abroad, but devils when they are at home.

\* Chap. iv 11.

## CHAPTER IX

## OF GENTLENESS TOWARDS OURSELVES

ONE of the good uses that we should make of gentleness, is that whereof the subject is in ourselves, never fretting at ourselves or at our imperfections; for though reason requires, that when we commit faults we should be displeased and sorry for them, yet we must restrain ourselves from having a displeasure which is bitter and sullen, fretful and angry. Wherein many commit a great fault, who, when they have given way to anger, are annoyed at having been annoyed, are vexed at having been vexed, and at having fretted; for by this means they keep their hearts preserved and steeped in anger: and although the second anger may seem to destroy the first, yet it serves as an opening and passage for a new anger on the first occasion which presents itself; and, moreover, these fits of anger, fretfulness and irritation, which we have against ourselves, tend to pride and have no other source than self-love, which is troubled and disquieted at seeing ourselves imperfect.

We must, then, have a dislike for our faults which is peaceable, dispassionate, and firm; for as a judge punishes the guilty much better, when he is guided by reason in passing judgement and proceeds in a spirit of tranquillity, than when he does so with impetuosity and passion, because if he judges with passion he does not punish the faults according as they are, but according as he is himself; even so we correct ourselves much better by a tranquil and steadfast repentance, than by that which is harsh, eager and passionate, because repentance made with impetuosity is not according to the gravity of our faults, but according to our inclinations. For example, he that prizes chastity will fret most bitterly over the least fault committed against this virtue, and will only smile at a gross slander which he has committed.

On the other hand, he that detests slander will be tormented at having whispered a trivial slander, and will make no account of a grave fault committed against chastity, and similarly of others; and this is only so, because they do not form the judgements of their conscience by reason, but by passion.

Believe me, Philothea, as the remonstrances of a father given gently and affectionately, have much more power to correct the child, than those which are given angrily and wrathfully, so when our heart has committed some fault, if we reprove it with gentle and calm remonstrances, having more compassion for it than anger against it, encouraging it to amendment, the repentance which it will conceive thereby will penetrate further, and will strike deeper roots, than a repentance which is fretful, angry and stormy.

For myself, if for example I had a great desire not to fall into the sin of vanity, and if, notwithstanding, I had fallen deeply into it, I would not seek to reprove my heart in this manner: "Art thou not miserable and abominable, that after so many resolutions thou hast suffered thyself to be carried away by vanity? Die of shame, raise no more thy eyes to heaven, blind, shameless that thou art, traitor and disloyal to thy God!" and such-like things; but I would rather reprove it in a reasonable and compassionate manner: "Well! my poor heart, here we are, fallen into the ditch which we had made so firm a resolution to avoid; ah! let us arise and leave it for ever; let us implore the mercy of God and trust that it will help us to be more steadfast in the future, and let us place ourselves again on the path of humility; courage! henceforth let us be more on our guard, God will help us, we shall do well enough." And upon this reproof I would build a solid and firm resolution not to fall any more into the fault, making use of the means suitable for that purpose, and following also the counsel of my director.

But if, notwithstanding, anyone should find that his heart cannot be sufficiently moved by this gentle correction, he can reproach it, and make use of harsh and stern reproofs, to excite it to a profound confusion, provided that, after having sternly chided his heart and shown his anger against it, he end by giving it some comfort, concluding all his sorrow and anger with a gentle and holy confidence in God, after the example of that great penitent who, seeing his soul afflicted, raised it up in this manner: *Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me? Hope thou in God, for I will yet praise him, who is the salvation of my countenance and my God.\**

Lift up your heart, then, quite gently, when it falls, humbling yourself profoundly before God by acknowledging your misery, without being in the least astonished at your fall, since it is not surprising that weakness should be weak, and feebleness feeble, and misery miserable. Nevertheless, detest with your whole heart the offence against God, and with great courage and confidence in his mercy, pursue once more the practice of the virtue which you had forsaken.

## CHAPTER X

THAT WE MUST MANAGE OUR AFFAIRS WITH CARE, BUT WITHOUT EAGERNESS OR ANXIETY

THE care and the diligence which we should have in our affairs are things very different from solicitude, anxiety and eagerness. The Angels have a care for our salvation, and occupy themselves with it diligently, but for all that they have not any solicitude, anxiety or eagerness; for care and diligence belong to their charity, but solicitude, anxiety and eagerness would be altogether contrary to their felicity: inasmuch as care and diligence may be accompanied with tran-

\* Ps. xlii 5.



quillity and peace of soul, but not solicitude or anxiety, and much less eagerness. Be careful, then, and diligent, my Philothea, in all the affairs which you have in your charge, for God having entrusted them to you, wills you to have a great care of them; but, if it be possible, do not be solicitous or anxious about them—that is to say, do not undertake them with disquietude, anxiety and eagerness. Do not be eager about your work: for every kind of eagerness disturbs the reason and the judgement, and even hinders us from doing the thing well, which we are so eager about.

When our Lord rebuked Martha he said: \* *Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and art troubled about many things.* See you, if she had been simply careful, she would not have been troubled; but because she was anxious and solicitous, she became eager and troubled, and therefore our Lord rebuked her. The rivers which flow gently through the plains bear great ships and rich merchandise, and the rain which falls gently upon the fields makes them fruitful in grass and corn; but the torrents and rivers which rush violently over the ground ruin the land that is near them, and are useless for traffic just as very heavy and tempestuous rain lays waste the fields and meadows. Never was work well done which was done with impetuosity and eagerness: we must make haste leisurely, as the old proverb says: *He that is hasty with his feet, says Solomon,† is in danger of stumbling.* We always do a thing quickly enough when we do it well. The drones make more noise and are in a greater hurry than the bees, but they only make the wax and not the honey; so those who are eager with a tormenting anxiety and with a clamorous solicitude never do much nor well.

Flies do not trouble us with their strength, but by their number: so important matters do not trouble us so much as small, when the latter are in great

\* Luke x 41.

† Prov. xix 2.



number. Receive, then, in peace the affairs which fall to your lot, and try to dispatch them in an orderly manner, one after the other; for if you seek to dispatch them all together, or without order, your efforts will weigh you down and weaken your spirit, and ordinarily you will be crushed down under the burden and will be unable to effect anything.

And in all your affairs rely wholly on the providence of God, to which alone all your plans owe their success; nevertheless work quite tranquilly on your part to co-operate with it, and then believe that if you have put your trust in God, the result will be always the most profitable for you, though it may seem to you good or bad according to your own judgement.

Do, as little children do, who with one hand cling to their father, and with the other gather strawberries or blackberries along the hedges; for in like manner, while you are gathering and handling the goods of this world with one hand, cling fast always with the other to the hand of your heavenly Father, turning to him from time to time, to see if your doings or your occupations be pleasing to him. And above all things, be careful not to let go of his hand and his protection, thinking to amass or to gather more; for if he abandons you, you will not take a single step without falling on your face. I mean, my Philothea, that, when you are occupied with ordinary matters which do not require any great and earnest attention, you should look more on God than on your affairs; but when the matters are of such great importance that to be well done they demand your whole attention, you should turn to God from time to time, as do those that sail the ocean, who, in order to reach the land they seek, look more up to the heavens than down on the ocean where they are sailing. In this way God will work with you, in you and for you, and your work will be followed by consolation.

## CHAPTER XI

## OF OBEDIENCE

CHARITY alone places us in perfection; but obedience, chastity and poverty are the three great means of acquiring it. Obedience consecrates our heart, chastity our body, and poverty our possessions to the love and service of God: they are the three branches of the spiritual cross, all three, however, founded upon the fourth which is humility. I will say nothing of these virtues, in so far as they are vowed solemnly, because that only concerns religious; nor even in so far as they are vowed simply, because although the vow always gives many graces and much merit to all the virtues, yet, to render us perfect, it is not necessary for them to be vowed, provided they be observed. For although when they are vowed, and especially when they are solemnly vowed, they place a man in a state of perfection, yet to place him in perfection itself it suffices that they be observed. For there is a great difference between the state of perfection and perfection, since all bishops and religious are in the state of perfection, yet all are not in perfection, as is but too plainly seen. Let us endeavour, then, Philothea, to practise these three virtues well, each one according to his vocation; for although they do not place us in the state of perfection, yet they will give us perfection itself; also we are all bound to practise these three virtues, though we are not all bound to practise them in the same way.

There are two states of obedience: the one necessary, and the other voluntary. By that which is necessary, you must humbly obey your ecclesiastical superiors, as the Pope and the Bishop, the parish priest and such as are authorized by them; you must obey your political superiors—that is to say, your prince and the officers whom he has set over

your country; and lastly, you must obey your household superiors—that is to say, your father, mother, master, mistress. Now this obedience is called necessary, because no one can exempt himself from the duty of obeying these superiors, God having placed them in authority to command and govern, each one according to the charge he has over us. Obey, then, their commands, for that is of necessity; but to be perfect, follow their counsels also, and even their desires and inclinations, so far as charity and prudence permit you. Obey when they order you to do something pleasant, as to eat or to take recreation; for although it may not seem a great virtue to obey in such a case, yet it would be a great fault to disobey; obey in indifferent things, as to wear such or such a garment, to go by one particular road or by another, to sing or to keep silence, and this would already be a very praiseworthy obedience; obey in things which are difficult, unpleasant and hard, and this will be a perfect obedience. In fine, obey meekly, without reply; promptly, without delay; cheerfully, without repining; and above all, obey lovingly for the love of him who, for the love of us, *was made obedient unto the death of the cross*,\* and who, as St Bernard says, chose rather to lose life than obedience.

In order to learn readily to obey your superiors, comply readily with the will of your equals, yielding to their opinions in what is not evil, without being contentious or obstinate; accommodate yourself willingly to the desires of your inferiors, so far as reason permits, without exercising any imperious authority over them so long as they are good.

It is a mistake to think that we would obey readily if we were religious, when we find ourselves difficult and stubborn in rendering obedience to those whom God has set over us.

We call that obedience voluntary to which we bind

\* Phil. ii 8.

ourselves by our own choice, and which is not imposed upon us by another. We do not ordinarily choose our prince or our bishop, nor do we choose our father and mother, and very often we do not even choose our husband, but we are free to choose our confessor, our director. Now, whether in choosing him we make a vow of obedience to him (as is said of Mother Teresa, who, besides the obedience vowed solemnly to the superior of her Order, bound herself by a simple vow of obedience to Father Gratian), or whether we bind ourselves without a vow to obey someone, this obedience is always called voluntary, because it is founded on our own will and choice.

We must obey all our superiors, each one, however, in that only wherein he has authority over us; as, for example, in whatever concerns civil government and public affairs we must obey our princes; in ecclesiastical matters we must obey our prelates; in domestic matters our father, our master, our husband; in the individual direction of the soul, our own director and confessor.

Ask your spiritual Father to prescribe the actions of piety which you should observe, because they will be the better for it, and will have double grace and goodness: the one, of themselves, since they are pious, and the other, from the obedience which has ordered them and in virtue of which they are performed. Blessed are the obedient, for God will never suffer them to go astray.

## CHAPTER XII

### OF THE NECESSITY OF CHASTITY

CHASTITY is the lily of the virtues, and makes men almost equal to the Angels. Nothing is beautiful but by purity, and the purity of men is chastity. Chastity is called honourableness, and the profession thereof honour; it is named integrity, and its opposite

corruption—in short, it has its glory apart in that it is the beautiful and white virtue of the soul and of the body.

It is never lawful to derive any carnal gratification from our bodies in any manner whatsoever, except in lawful marriage, the sanctity of which is able, by a just compensation, to repair the loss which is received in the delectation. And even in marriage we must observe honesty of intention, so that, if there be anything unseemly in the pleasure that is taken, there may be nothing but honesty in the will which takes it.

The chaste heart is like the mother pearl which can receive no drop of water but such as comes from heaven, for it can receive no pleasure but that of marriage which is ordained by Heaven; beyond this it is not even permitted to think of it with a thought which is voluptuous, voluntary and deliberately entertained.

For the first degree of this virtue, take care, Philothea, not to admit any sort of carnal gratification that is prohibited and forbidden, as are all those which are taken out of marriage, or even in marriage when they are taken against the rule of marriage. For the second, refrain yourself as far as possible from useless and superfluous delectations, though they be lawful and permissible. For the third do not set your affections on those pleasures and gratifications which are commanded and ordained; for though we must practise certain necessary delectations—that is to say, those which concern the end and institution of holy marriage—yet we must never set our heart and mind upon them.

For the rest, everyone has great need of this virtue. Those that are in the state of widowhood must have a courageous chastity, which not only despises present and future objects, but which resists the imaginations which former pleasures lawfully received in marriage can stir up in their souls, which for that reason are



more prone to feel the force of fleshly allurements. For this cause, St Augustine admires the purity of his dear Alipius, who had wholly forgotten and despised the pleasures of the flesh, of which he had sometimes tasted in his youth. And in truth, so long as fruits are undamaged they may be preserved, some in straw, some in sand, and some in their own leaves; but when they are once bruised, it is almost impossible to keep them but with honey and sugar in conserves: in like manner chastity which has never yet been wounded or violated can be kept in many ways, but when it has once been impaired, nothing can conserve it but an excellent devotion, which, as I have often said, is the true spiritual honey and sugar.

Virgins have need of an extremely simple and delicate chastity, in order to banish from their hearts all kinds of curious thoughts, and to despise with an absolute contempt all kinds of unclean pleasures, which indeed do not deserve to be desired by man, since asses and swine have more aptitude for them than human beings. Let these pure souls, therefore, be careful never to doubt that chastity is incomparably better than all that is incompatible with it; for, as the great St Jerome says, the enemy strongly tempts virgins to the desire of tasting these pleasures, representing them to them as infinitely more pleasant and delightful than they are; and this often troubles them very much, because, as this holy Father says, "they esteem that more sweet of which they know nothing."

For, as the little moth seeing the flame flutters about it, being curious to try if it be as sweet as it is beautiful in appearance, and carried away by this fancy ceases not till it is lost at the first trial; so young persons very often allow themselves to be so much swayed by the false and foolish estimation which they have formed of the pleasure of the ardours of passion, that after indulging their curiosity in



many thoughts, they finally plunge into ruin and destruction; being more foolish in this than the moths, which have some reason to think that the fire is delicious since it is so beautiful, whereas they, knowing that which they seek to be extremely shameful, cease not for all that to over-estimate the senseless and brutish pleasure thereof.

But as for those who are married, it is most true, though people do not commonly think so, that chastity is very necessary for them, because in their case it does not consist in abstaining altogether from carnal pleasures, but in exercising self-control in the midst of them. Now, since the commandment, *Be angry and sin not*,\* is, in my opinion, more difficult than this: "Be not angry at all," and because it is easier to refrain altogether from anger than to regulate it, so also it is easier to refrain altogether from carnal pleasures than to observe moderation in them. It is true that the holy liberty of marriage has a special power to allay the ardour of concupiscence, but the frailty of those who enjoy it passes easily from permission to dissoluteness, and from use to abuse. And as we see many rich persons steal, not from poverty, but from avarice, so also we see many married people give way to excess through lack of restraint and wantonness, notwithstanding the lawful object, to which they ought and should be able to confine themselves; their concupiscence being like an unsteady flame, which goes burning lightly here and there without settling down anywhere. It is always dangerous to take strong remedies, because if we take more than we should, or if they be not well prepared, we receive much harm from them: marriage has been blessed and ordained in part as a remedy against concupiscence, and it is without doubt a very good remedy, but a strong one none the less, and in consequence very dangerous, if it be not discreetly used.

\* Ps. iv 5.

I add that, besides long illnesses, human affairs of various kinds often separate husbands from their wives, and therefore married persons have need of two sorts of chastity; the one for entire continence when they are separated from one another on such occasions as I have mentioned above; the other, for moderation when they are living together in the ordinary course. Indeed, St Catherine of Siena saw amongst the damned many souls in great torment for having violated the sanctity of marriage which happened, she said, not because of the enormity of the sin, for murders and blasphemies are more grievous, but “because those that commit it do not make it a matter of conscience,” and consequently continue for a long time in it.

You see, then, that chastity is necessary for all kinds of persons. *Follow peace with all men*, says the Apostle, *and holiness without which no man shall see God*.<sup>\*</sup> Now *the holiness* which he means is chastity, as St Jerome and St Chrysostom have remarked. No, Philothea, no one will see God without chastity, no one *will dwell in his holy tabernacle*† who is not *clean of heart*;‡ and as the Saviour himself says, *the dogs and the unchaste shall be banished from it*,§ and: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God*.||

## CHAPTER XIII

### COUNSELS FOR PRESERVING CHASTITY

BE extremely prompt in turning away from all the advances and from all the allurements of incontinence, for this evil works insensibly, and by little beginnings advances to great misfortunes: it is always easier to flee than to cure it.

Human bodies are like glasses, which cannot be carried in contact with one another without running

\* Heb. xi 14.

† Ps. xiv 1.

‡ Ps. xxiii 4.

§ Apoc. xxii 15.

|| Matt. v 8.

a risk of being broken, and like fruits, which, though sound and well seasoned, are damaged when placed in contact with one another. Even water within a vessel, however fresh it may be, when it is touched by some beast of the earth, cannot long preserve its freshness. Never permit anyone, Philothea, to touch you in an unmannerly fashion, either by way of play or by way of favour; for though perchance chastity may be preserved amidst these actions which are rather frivolous than malicious, yet the freshness and bloom of chastity always receives some harm and loss therefrom; but to allow oneself to be touched immodestly is the utter ruin of chastity.

Chastity depends on the heart as its source, but it is concerned with the body as its matter; and therefore it may be lost by all the exterior senses of the body and by the thoughts and desires of the heart. It is immodesty to behold, to hear, to speak, to smell, to touch impure things, when the heart occupies itself with them and takes pleasure in them. St Paul says quite shortly: *Let not fornication be so much as named among you.*\* Bees not only refuse to touch carrion, but they shun and dislike intensely all kinds of unsavoury smells which come from it. The sacred Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles has *hands which drop with myrrh*,† which is a preservative against corruption; her *lips are as a scarlet lace*,‡ a mark of the modesty of her words; her *eyes are those of a dove*§ by reason of their clearness; her ears have *earrings of gold*,|| a token of purity; her *nose is likened to the cedars of Libanus*,¶ an incorruptible wood. Such ought the devout soul to be: chaste, clean and modest, in hands, in lips, in ears, in eyes and in all her body.

To this end, I will tell you of a saying which the ancient Father John Cassian relates as having come

\* Ephes. v 3.

‡ Chap. iv 3.

|| Chap. i 10.

† Chap. v 5.

§ Chap. iv 1.

¶ Chap. vii 4.

from the mouth of the great St Basil, who, speaking of himself, said one day: "I know nothing of women, and yet I am not a virgin." Certainly, chastity may be lost in as many ways as there are kinds of immodesty and wantonness; and, according as they are great or small, some of these enfeeble it, others wound it, and others cause it to be lost entirely. There are certain indiscreet, foolish and sensual familiarities and intimacies, which strictly speaking, do not violate chastity, and yet they enfeeble it, make it languid, and tarnish its beautiful whiteness. There are other familiarities and intimacies, not only indiscreet but vicious, not only foolish but impure, not only sensual but carnal; and by these chastity is, at the least, sorely wounded and endangered. I say "at the least," because it dies and perishes altogether when the acts of indecency and lasciviousness give to the flesh the final effect of voluptuous pleasure; for then chastity perishes more unworthily, wickedly and miserably than when it is lost by fornication, or even by adultery and incest; for these latter kinds of filthiness are but sins, whereas the former, as Tertullian says in his book *de Pudicitia*, are monsters of iniquity and sin. Now Cassian does not believe, any more than I do, that St Basil was thinking of any such lasciviousness, when he accuses himself of not being a virgin; for I think that he was only alluding to the bad and voluptuous thoughts, which, though they had not defiled his body, had yet contaminated his heart, of the chastity whereof all generous souls are extremely jealous.

Do not associate at all with immodest persons, especially if they be also unashamed of being immodest, as they almost always are; for, as the he-goats when they touch the almond-trees with their tongues make them become bitter, so these malodorous souls and corrupted hearts can scarcely speak to anyone, either of the same sex or of the other, without causing some sort of loss to modesty: they have poison in

their eyes and in their breath like the basilisks. On the contrary, associate with chaste and virtuous persons; think upon holy things and often read holy books, for *the word of God is chaste*,\* and makes them chaste that delight in it; which makes David compare it to the *topaz*,† a precious stone which has power to allay the ardour of concupiscence.

Keep yourself always close to Jesus Christ crucified, both spiritually by meditation, and really by Holy Communion; for just as those who take their rest upon the herb called *agnus castus* become chaste and modest, so you also, resting your heart upon our Lord who is the true Lamb chaste and immaculate, will soon find your soul purified from all defilements and impurities.

## CHAPTER XIV

### OF POVERTY OF SPIRIT OBSERVED IN THE MIDST OF RICHES

*BLESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*;‡ unhappy, then, are the rich in spirit, for theirs is the misery of hell. He is rich in spirit that has his riches in his spirit, or his spirit in his riches; he is poor in spirit that has no riches in his spirit, nor his spirit in his riches. The halcyons make their nests round like a ball, and only leave in them a small opening on the top; they place them on the sea-shore, and, moreover, make them so strong and impenetrable that if the waves surprise them, the water can never get into them; but, floating ever in the right position, they remain in the midst of the sea, upon the sea, and masters of the sea. Your heart, dear Philothea, should be like that, open only to heaven and impenetrable to riches and transitory things: if you have them, keep your heart free from affection to them; let it always keep uppermost, and

\* Ps. xi 7.

† Ps. cxviii 127.

‡ Matt. v 3.



in the midst of riches let it be always without riches and master of riches. No, do not place this heavenly spirit within earthly goods; let it be always superior to them, upon them, not in them.

There is a difference between having poison and being poisoned: almost all apothecaries have poisons to use upon divers occasions, but for all that they are not poisoned, because they have not the poison in their bodies but in their shops; so you may have riches without being poisoned by them—that is to say, if you have them in your house or in your purse, and not in your heart. To possess riches in actual fact, and to be poor in affection for them is the great happiness of the Christian; for by this means he has the convenience of riches for this world, and the merit of poverty for the next.

Alas! Philothea, no one will confess to being covetous; everyone repudiates this baseness and meanness of heart. They excuse themselves because of the crippling expenses incurred for their children, because prudence demands that they should make their own position secure; they never have too much, there are always certain reasons which make it necessary to have still more; and even the most covetous not only will not admit that they are covetous, but they do not think in their conscience that they are such; no, for covetousness is a raging fever, which, the more violent and burning it is, becomes so much the more unperceived. Moses saw the holy fire, which burned in a bush, and yet did not consume it; but, on the contrary, the unholy fire of covetousness consumes and devours the covetous person and yet he is insensible to its burning; at least, in the midst of its fierce burning and heat he boasts of the most agreeable coolness, and holds that his insatiable craving is a natural and pleasant thirst.

If you have a lasting, ardent and anxious desire for the goods which you have not, it is useless to say that you do not wish to have them unjustly, for



in spite of what you say, you will not cease to be truly covetous. He that has an ardent, lasting and anxious desire to drink, even though it be to drink but water, yet testifies that he has fever.

O Philothea, I know not if it be a just desire to desire to have justly what another possesses justly: for it seems that by this desire we would profit ourselves at the expense of another. Has not he that possesses something justly more right to keep it justly than we have to wish to have it justly? Why, then, should we stretch forth our desire to that which is of service to him, so as to deprive him of it? At most, if this desire be just, certainly, it is not for all that charitable; for we would by no means like anyone else to desire, even justly, what we wish to keep justly. This was the sin of Achab, who wished justly to possess the vineyard of Naboth, who, however, wished more justly still to keep it: he had an ardent, lasting and anxious desire for it, and therefore he offended God.

Refrain, dear Philothea, from desiring your neighbour's goods until such time as he begins to desire to part with them; for then his desire will make yours not only just, but charitable: yes, for I would indeed have you take care to increase your riches and possessions, provided that it be done not only justly, but gently and charitably.

If you are much attached to the goods which you have, if you are much wrapt up in them, setting your heart on them, fixing your thoughts on them and fearing with a lively and anxious fear to lose them, believe me, you still have some sort of fever; for they that have fever drink the water which is given them with a certain eagerness, with a kind of attention and satisfaction which the healthy are not wont to have: it is not possible to take great pleasure in a thing without having much affection for it. If perchance you suffer loss of goods, and feel that your heart is much disturbed and afflicted thereat,

believe, Philothea, that you have much affection for them; for there is no clearer proof of affection for a thing than distress at the loss thereof.

Therefore do not desire with a fully formed desire the goods which you have not; and do not set your heart too much upon those which you have; be not at all disturbed at the losses which befall you, and you will have some reason to believe, that being rich in effect, you are not so in affection, but that you are poor in spirit, and consequently blessed, *for yours is the Kingdom of heaven.\**

## CHAPTER XV

HOW TO PRACTISE REAL POVERTY, REMAINING NOTWITHSTANDING ACTUALLY RICH

THE painter Parrhasius painted the Athenian people in a very ingenious manner, representing them with a diverse and variable natural temperament; angry, unjust, inconstant, courteous, clement, merciful, haughty, vain-glorious, humble, blustering and cowardly, and all this together; but as for me, dear Philothea, I would put into your heart riches and poverty together, a great care for temporal things and a great contempt of them.

Have a greater care to make your goods useful and fruitful than worldlings have. Tell me, are not the gardeners of great princes more careful and diligent in cultivating and embellishing the gardens that they have in charge, than if they actually belonged to them? Because, without doubt, they consider those gardens to be the gardens of princes and of kings, to whom they desire to make themselves acceptable by those services. My Philothea, the possessions which we have are not our own: God has given them to us to cultivate, and he wishes us to render them fruitful and profitable, and therefore

\* Matt. v 3.

we do him an agreeable service in taking care of them.

But it must be a greater and more solid care than that which worldlings take for their goods, for they labour but for the love of themselves and we should work for the love of God: now, just as the love of self is a violent, turbulent and eager love, so the care that is taken for it is full of trouble, of vexation and of disquiet; and just as the love of God is gentle, peaceable and tranquil, so the care which proceeds from it, even though it be for worldly goods, is amiable, gentle and gracious. Let us then have this gracious care for the preservation, yea, for the increase of our temporal goods, when some just occasion presents itself, and in so far as our condition of life requires it, for God wills that we should do so for the love of him.

But take heed lest self-love deceive you, for sometimes it counterfeits the love of God so well that it may be mistaken for it: now to ensure that it deceive you not, and that this care of temporal goods be not converted into covetousness, besides what I said in the preceding chapter, we must very often practise real and effective poverty, in the midst of all the possessions and riches that God has given us.

Always deprive yourself, therefore, of some part of your means, giving them to the poor with a willing heart: for to give what one has is to make oneself by so much the poorer, and the more you give the poorer you will make yourself. It is true that God will return it to you, not only in the next world, but also in this, for there is nothing which makes a person prosper in temporal matters so much as almsgiving; but till such time as God shall repay it, you will always be impoverished to that extent. Oh! how holy and rich is the impoverishment which is caused by almsgiving.

Love the poor and poverty, for by this love you will become truly poor, since, as Scripture says, we

become like the things that we love. Love makes them that love equal to one another: *Who is weak, and I am not weak?* says St Paul.\* He might have said: Who is poor, with whom I am not poor? For love made him become such as those whom he loved. If, then, you love the poor, you will be truly participating in their poverty, and poor like them. Now, if you love the poor, be often among them; be pleased to see them in your house, and to visit them in theirs; associate willingly with them; be glad that they are near you in the churches, in the streets and elsewhere. Be poor in speech with them, speaking to them as their equal; but be rich in deed, giving them of your goods as one that possesses more abundantly.

Will you do even more, my Philothea? Do not be content with being poor like the poor, but be poorer even than the poor. And how is that? *The servant is of less account than his master:*† become, then, a servant of the poor; go to serve them in their beds when they are sick, yea, with your own hands; be their cook and at your own expense; be their sempstress and laundress. O my Philothea, this service has more glory in it than a throne.

I cannot sufficiently admire the zeal with which this counsel was practised by St Louis, one of the greatest kings that the world has ever seen, and I say "a great king" in every kind of greatness. He used often to wait at table on the poor whom he maintained, and almost every day invited three of them to his own table; and often he would eat the remains of their repast with incomparable love. When he visited the hospitals of the sick (which he did very often), he was wont ordinarily to serve those that had the most loathsome diseases, such as the leprous, the cancerous and such-like, and performed all his service to them bareheaded and on his knees, reverencing in their persons the Saviour

\* 2 Cor. xi 29.

† John xiii 16.

of the world, and cherishing them with a love as tender as that of a fond mother for her child.

St Elizabeth, daughter of the King of Hungary, mingled freely with the poor, and for recreation used sometimes to dress as a poor woman among her ladies, saying to them: If I were poor I should be dressed in this manner. O my God, dear Philothea, truly this prince and this princess were poor in the midst of their riches, and were rich in their poverty.

*Blessed are they that are poor in this manner, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.\* I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was cold and you covered me: possess ye the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;†* thus will the King of the poor and of kings speak at his great judgement.

There is no one who has not at some time or other to suffer some lack and want of what is convenient. Sometimes a guest comes to our house whom it is our duty and wish to entertain well, but, for the time being, we have not the means; our best clothes are in one place, and we have need of them in another where we have to present ourselves; it happens that all the wines in our cellar have turned sour, and there remain none but inferior and unmatured wines; we find ourselves in the country in some poor little place where everything is lacking: there is neither bed, nor room, nor table, nor attendance. In fine, we may very often be in want of something, however rich we may be. Philothea, rejoice at these occurrences, accept them with a willing heart, and suffer them cheerfully.

Should misfortunes befall you which impoverish you either much or little, as tempests, fires, inundations, dearth, law-suits, oh! then, there is a real opportunity to practise poverty, receiving these losses with composure, and bearing this impoverishment with patience and constancy. Esau came to his father's presence with his hands all hairy, and

\* Matt. v 3.

† Matt. xxv 34-36.



Jacob did the same; but because the hair which was on the hands of Jacob was not attached to his skin, but to his gloves, it could be removed without hurting him or flaying him; on the contrary, because the hair on the hands of Esau was attached to his skin, which was all hairy by nature, had anyone wished to pluck away the hair, he would have caused him much pain, and Esau would have cried aloud, and would have made a stout resistance. When our possessions are attached to our hearts, if the tempest, or the thief, or the pettifogger take away some portion of them from us, what complaints we make, how troubled we are and how impatient! But if our possessions are only attached to the care which God wishes us to have for them, and not to our hearts, if they are taken away from us, we do not lose our good sense or our peace of soul. This is the difference between beasts and men in regard to their garments: for the garments of beasts are attached to their flesh, whilst those of men are only applied to it in such a way that they may be put on and taken off at their pleasure.

## CHAPTER XVI

### HOW TO PRACTISE RICHNESS OF SPIRIT IN REAL POVERTY

BUT if you are really poor, dearest Philothea, O God, be poor also in spirit; make a virtue of necessity, make use of this precious stone of poverty for what it is worth: its lustre is not clearly seen in this world, and yet it is exceeding beautiful and rich.

Have patience, you are in good company: our Lord, our Lady, the Apostles, so many saints both men and women, have been poor, and though able to be rich they have disdained to be so. How many rich worldlings, in the face of strong opposition, have gone to seek, with the utmost diligence, holy poverty within the cloister and the hospital. They



have taken great pains to find her, witness St Alexis, St Paula, St Paulinus, St Angela, and so many others; and behold, Philothea, she comes in more gracious garb to present herself at your house; you have met her without seeking her and without any trouble; embrace her, then, as the dear friend of Jesus Christ, who was born, lived and died in the company of poverty, who was his nurse throughout his life.

Your poverty, Philothea, has two great privileges, by means of which you can become rich in merit. The first is that poverty came not to you by your own choice, but by the will of God alone, who has made you poor without any concurrence of your own will. Now that which we receive purely from the will of God is always very acceptable to him, provided that we receive it with a willing heart, and for the love of his holy will; where there is less of our own, there is more of God. The simple and entire acceptance of the will of God makes suffering extremely pure.

The second privilege of this poverty is that it is a poverty which is truly poor. A poverty that is praised, noticed, made much of, succoured and assisted, savours of richness—at least, it is not altogether poor; but a poverty that is despised, rejected, reproached and abandoned, is truly poor. Such is ordinarily the poverty of persons in the world; for because they are not poor by their own choice, but of necessity, people make little account of it, and in this respect, their poverty is poorer than that of religious, although the latter has on another account a very great excellence, and is the more commendable because of the vows and of the intention for which it has been chosen.

Do not complain then, my dear Philothea, of your poverty; for we only complain of that which displeases us, and if poverty displeases you, you are not poor in spirit, but rich by reason of your attachment to riches.

Do not be troubled at not being assisted in your need as much as is requisite; for therein consists the excellence of poverty. To desire to be poor, but not to be inconvenienced by poverty, is a great ambition; for it is to desire the honour of poverty and the convenience of riches.

Be not ashamed to be poor, or to ask alms in charity: receive what is given you with humility, and accept a refusal with meekness. Often call to mind the journey which our Lady made to Egypt to carry thither her dear Child, and how much contempt, poverty and misery she had to endure. If you live like that, you will be rich in your poverty.

## CHAPTER XVII

### OF FRIENDSHIP, AND FIRST OF THAT WHICH IS BAD AND FRIVOLOUS

LOVE holds the first place among the passions of the soul: it is the king of all the movements of the heart, converts all the others to itself, and makes us such as that which it loves. Be very careful, then, my Philothea, to have no love that is bad, for in that case you will very soon become altogether bad yourself. Now friendship is the most dangerous love of all, because other loves may be without intercommunication, but friendship being wholly founded upon it, it is almost impossible to have it with any person without participating in his qualities.

All love is not friendship; for (1) one can love without being loved, and then there is love but not friendship, because friendship is a mutual love; and if it be not mutual it is not friendship. (2) Nor is it enough that it be mutual, but the persons that love one another must know their reciprocal affection, for if they know it not, they will have love, but not friendship. (3) There must also be some kind of intercommunication which is the foundation of the friendship.

There are divers kinds of friendships according to the divers kinds of intercommunication, which in their turn differ from one another according to the divers kinds of things which are communicated: if they be false and vain things, the friendship is false and vain; if they be truly good things, the friendship is true; and the more excellent the good things are, the more excellent will the friendship be. For, as the best honey is made from the florets of the choicest flowers, so the love which is founded on an intercommunication of truly good things is the most excellent; and as in Heraclea in Pontus there is a honey which is poisonous and stupefies them that eat it, because it is gathered from the aconite which is abundant in that region, so the friendship founded upon an intercommunication of false and evil things is altogether false and evil.

An intercommunication of carnal pleasures is a mutual inclination and animal attraction, which can no more bear the name of friendship in the case of human beings, than can that of asses and horses for the like effects; and if there were no other communication in marriage there would be no friendship at all therein; but because in marriage there is also an intercommunication of life, of work, of goods, of affection, and of an indissoluble fidelity, therefore the friendship of marriage is a true and holy friendship.

The friendship founded upon intercommunication of sensual pleasures is altogether gross and unworthy of the name of friendship, as also is that which is founded on frivolous and vain qualities, because these qualities depend also on the senses. I call those pleasures sensual which are connected immediately and principally with the exterior senses, such as the pleasure of seeing beauty, of hearing a sweet voice, of touching and the like. I mean by frivolous qualities certain vain accomplishments and qualifications, which feeble spirits call virtues and perfections.

Listen to the talk of most girls, women and young folk, who do not hesitate to say: such a man is very accomplished, he has many perfections, for he dances well, he plays all kinds of games well, he dresses well, he sings well, he converses nicely, he is good-looking; and mountebanks consider those of their number to be the most accomplished who are the greatest clowns. Now as all these things concern the senses, so also the friendships which are founded on them are called sensual, vain and frivolous, and deserve rather the name of wanton foolishness than of friendship. Such are ordinarily the friendships of young persons, which are founded on moustaches, on hair, on tender glances, on clothes, on conceit, on idle discourse; friendships worthy of the age of the lovers, whose virtue is as yet in down, and whose judgement is but in the bud; and therefore such friendships are but transitory and melt away like snow in the sun.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### OF FLIRTATIONS

WHEN these wanton friendships are formed between persons of different sex, and with no intention of marriage, they are called flirtations; for since they are but abortions or rather phantoms of friendship, they do not deserve the name of friendship or of love, because of their utter emptiness and imperfection. By these the hearts of men and women are caught and held and entangled one with another in vain and foolish affections, founded on these frivolous inter-communications and wretched gratifications, of which I have just spoken. And although these foolish loves ordinarily end and are swallowed up in very vile carnal lusts and lasciviousness, yet this is not the original intention of them that engage in them; otherwise they would not be merely flirtations, but open lewdness. Sometimes several years may pass

before anything that is directly contrary to bodily chastity takes place between those smitten with this folly; for they go no farther than to enervate their hearts with wishes, desires, sighs, fond attentions, and other like fooleries and vanities, and this for divers purposes.

Some have no other design than to gratify their hearts by giving and receiving love, following therein their amorous inclinations, and these in the choice of their loves, consider nothing but their own fancy and instinct; so that, when they meet with any pleasing person, without examining the interior dispositions or the behaviour of such a one, they begin this flirtatious intercourse, and entangle themselves in these miserable meshes, from which they will afterwards find it difficult to escape. Others suffer themselves to be drawn into these snares by vanity, for they deem it no small glory to take and bind hearts by love; and these making their choice for the sake of glory, set their snares and spread their toils in conspicuous, elevated, uncommon and eminent places. Others are led away both by their amorous inclinations and by vanity; for although their hearts are inclined to love, yet they do not wish to engage in it, unless they can acquire some glory for themselves.

These friendships are all bad, foolish and vain: bad, because they finally end and terminate in sins of the flesh, and deprive God, the wife and the husband of love, and consequently of the heart, which belongs to them by right; foolish, because they have neither foundation nor reason; vain, because they bring neither profit, nor honour, nor contentment: on the contrary, they waste time, compromise honour, without giving any pleasure save that of anxious aspirations and hopes, without knowing what is wished for or what is aimed at. For it is always the opinion of these wretched and feeble spirits that there is something or other desirable in these tokens of mutual love which they give one another, and yet



they cannot say what it is; so that their desire cannot have an end; but goes on continually troubling their hearts with perpetual suspicions, jealousies and anxieties.

St Gregory Nazianzen, writing against frivolous women, says excellent things upon this subject; here is a short extract, which he addresses in reality to women, but which is applicable also to men: "Thy natural beauty is sufficient for thy husband; but if it be for several men, like a net spread for a flock of birds, what will be the result? He that is pleased with thy beauty, will be pleasing to thee; thou wilt give glance for glance, look for look; straightway there will follow smiles and little words of love, which are uttered guardedly at first, but soon become more familiar and pass on to open love-making. Take heed, O my tongue, and say not what will happen afterwards; but I will say this one truth: everything that these young men and women say or do together in these foolish complacencies is an incitement to evil. All the trashy things that go to make up flirtations are joined one to another, and they all follow one another, neither more nor less than a piece of iron drawn by the magnet draws many other pieces after it."

Oh! how wisely does this great Bishop speak! What do you think to do? To give love, is it not? But no one gives love willingly, who does not take it necessarily; he that takes is taken in the game. The herb *aproxis* receives and conceives fire as soon as it beholds it: our hearts are the same; as soon as they see a soul inflamed with love for them, they are forthwith set on fire with love for it. I wish to taste of it indeed, someone may say to me, but not to take very much of it. Alas! you deceive yourself, this fire of love is more active and penetrating than it seems; you think to receive but a little spark of it, and you will be wholly astonished to see that in a moment it has seized your whole heart, reduced



all your resolutions to ashes, and your reputation to smoke. The Wise Man cries out: *Who will pity a snake-charmer struck by a serpent?*\* And I cry out after him: O foolish and senseless persons, do you think that you can charm love so as to be able to handle it according to your pleasure? You wish to play with it, and it will sting and bite you grievously. And do you know what people will say? Everyone will mock you, and laugh because you wished to charm love, and, with misplaced confidence, wished to put a dangerous serpent in your bosom, which has stung and poisoned you in soul and in honour.

O God, what blindness it is thus recklessly to risk our souls for such frivolous stakes. Yes, Philothea, for God only values man for his soul, and the soul only for its will, and the will only for its love. Alas! we have not nearly so much love as we need; I mean, we are infinitely far from having enough love, wherewith to love God, and yet, miserable creatures that we are, we waste it and pour it out upon things that are foolish and vain and frivolous, as if we had enough and to spare. Ah! this great God, who had reserved for himself the sole love of our souls in recognition of their creation, preservation and redemption, will demand a very strict account of these foolish misapplications which we make of it; and if he will make so strict a scrutiny of *idle words*,† what will he do in regard to idle, aimless, foolish and pernicious friendships?

The walnut-tree does much harm to the vines and to the fields where it is planted, because, being so great, it draws all the moisture of the soil, which is not sufficient thereafter to nourish the other plants; its foliage is so dense that it makes a great and thick shade, and it draws to itself the passers-by, who, to beat down its fruit, spoil and trample on all that is around it. These flirtations cause the same injuries to the soul, for they occupy her so much and

\* Eccclus. xii 13.

† Matt. xii 36.

so strongly draw her movements, that she has not sufficient strength left for any good work; the leaves—that is to say, the interviews, dalliances and blandishments are so frequent that they waste all the leisure time of the parties; and in fine they draw so many temptations, distractions, suspicions and other consequences, that the whole heart is trampled upon and spoilt thereby. In short, these flirtations banish not only heavenly love, but also the fear of God, they enervate the spirit and damage the reputation; they are, in a word, the plaything of courts, but the pest of hearts.

## CHAPTER XIX

### OF TRUE FRIENDSHIPS

O PHILOTHEA, love everyone with a great love of charity, but have no friendship save with those who can communicate with you in virtuous things; and the more exquisite the virtues are, which are the matter of your intercommunication, the more perfect will your friendship be. If the matter of your intercommunication be knowledge, your friendship is assuredly very praiseworthy; still more so if it be the practice of virtues, prudence, discretion, fortitude and justice. But if your mutual and reciprocal communication be founded on charity, on devotion, on Christian perfection, O God! how precious will your friendship be! It will be excellent because it comes from God, excellent because it tends to God, excellent because its bond is God, excellent because it will endure eternally in God. Oh! how good it is to love on earth as we shall love in heaven, and to learn to cherish one another in this world as we shall do eternally in the next.

I speak not here of the simple love of charity, for we ought to have this for all men; but I speak of spiritual friendship, by which two or three or more persons share their devotion and their affections

with one another, and become one in spirit. How justly can such happy persons cry out: *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity !*\* Yes, for the delicious balm of devotion distils from one heart to another by a continual inter-communication, so that it may be said that *God hath poured out upon this friendship his blessing and life for evermore.*†

All other friendships, in my opinion, are but shadows in comparison with this, and their bonds are but chains of glass or of jet, when compared with this great bond of holy devotion, which is all of gold.

Do not form friendships of any other kind, I mean friendships of your own choice; for you must not forsake or disregard the friendships which nature and former obligations constrain you to cultivate with relations, with connections, with benefactors, with neighbours and others; I speak of those which you choose yourself.

Many will tell you perhaps, that we should not have any sort of particular affection and friendship, because it occupies the heart, distracts the mind, and begets envy: but they are mistaken in their counsels; for they have seen in the writings of many holy persons and devout authors that particular friendships and excessive affections are very injurious to religious, and they think that this applies to the rest of the world; but there is a clear distinction to be drawn. For since in a well-regulated monastery the common aim of all tends to true devotion, there is no need to form particular friendships there, for fear lest, making a particular aim of that which is the common aim, they pass from particular friendships to partialities; but as for those who live in the world, and who embrace true virtue, it is necessary for them to form holy and sacred friendships with one another; for by this means they encourage one another, help one another, and lead one another on to good. And as

\* Ps. cxxxii 1. .

† *Ibid.*, 3.

those who journey on level ground have no need to give one another their hands, whereas those who are on rough and slippery roads hold fast one to another in order to walk more securely, so those who belong to religious orders have no need of particular friendships; but those who are in the world have need of them, in order to walk securely and help one another, in the many difficult places through which they have to pass. In the world, all do not aim at the same end, all have not the same spirit; we must therefore draw apart and form friendships in conformity with our aim; and this particular friendship is truly a partiality, but a holy partiality, which makes no distinction save between good and evil, between sheep and goats, and between bees and hornets—a very necessary distinction.

Indeed, no one can deny that our Lord loved St John, Lazarus, Martha and Magdalen with a more tender and more special affection, for the Scripture attests it. We know that St Peter tenderly loved St Mark and St Petronilla, as did St Paul his Timothy and his St Thecla. St Gregory Nazianzen boasts a hundred times of his incomparable friendship with the great St Basil, and describes it thus: "It seemed as though there were but one soul between us, having two bodies. And if we must not believe those who say that all things are in all things, yet you must believe this, that we were both in each one of us, and the one in the other; we had both but one intention, to cultivate virtue and to subordinate all the aims of our life to future hopes, thus quitting this mortal earth before actually dying to it." St Augustine testifies that St Ambrose had an incomparable love for St Monica, because of the rare virtues which he perceived in her and that she on her part loved him as an Angel of God.

But I am wrong to take up your time in a matter which is so clear. St Jerome, St Augustine, St Gregory, St Bernard and all the greatest servants

of God have had very particular friendships without prejudice to their perfection. St Paul, upbraiding the Gentiles for their disorders, accuses them of being *without affection*,\* that is to say—of having no friendship. And St Thomas, like all sound philosophers, avows that friendship is a virtue: and he speaks of particular friendship, since, as he says, perfect friendship cannot extend to many persons. Perfection, then, does not consist in having no friendship at all, but in having only that which is good, holy and sacred.

## CHAPTER XX

### OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUE FRIENDSHIPS AND VAIN

THIS, then, is the important admonition, my Philothea. The honey of Heraclea, which is so poisonous, resembles the other which is so wholesome; there is a great danger of taking the one for the other, or of taking them mixed together, for the wholesome properties of the one would not counteract the hurtful properties of the other. We must be on our guard so as not to be deceived in these friendships, especially when they are contracted between persons of different sexes, no matter what the pretext may be; for very often Satan misleads those that love. They begin by virtuous love, but if they are not wise, frivolous love will mingle with it, then sensual love, then carnal love; yes, there is danger even in spiritual love, unless we are very much on our guard, though in this it is more difficult to be deceived, because the purity and whiteness thereof make it easier to detect the defilements which Satan seeks to mingle with it; and therefore when he undertakes the task, he does it more craftily, and endeavours to insinuate impurities almost imperceptibly.

You may distinguish worldly friendship from that

\* Rom. i 31.



which is holy and virtuous, in the same way as the honey of Heraclea is distinguished from good honey: the honey of Heraclea is sweeter to the tongue than ordinary honey, because of the aconite which gives it additional sweetness, and worldly friendship ordinarily produces a great quantity of honeyed words, and flattering speeches, wherein are impassioned expressions and praises drawn from beauty, from gracefulness and from sensual qualities; but holy friendship speaks a simple and frank language, has no praise save for the power and grace of God, the sole foundation upon which it rests. The honey of Heraclea causes dizziness in the head, and false friendship causes dizziness in the soul, which makes the person reel in virtue and devotion, leading her to indulge in amorous, mincing and immoderate looks, in sensual caresses, in inordinate sighs, in little complaints of not being loved, in little, but studied and alluring attitudes, in compliments, in seeking for kisses, and in other improper familiarities and favours—certain and indubitable tokens of the coming ruin of chastity; but holy friendship has only pure and modest eyes, only chaste and innocent embraces, sighs only for heaven, familiarities only for the spirit, complaints only when God is not loved—infallible tokens of chastity. The honey of Heraclea disturbs the sight, and this worldly friendship disturbs the judgement, so that those who are infected with it think that they are doing well when they are doing evil, and believe that their excuses, pretexts and words are true reasons; they fear the light and love the darkness; but holy friendship has clear-sighted eyes, and does not conceal itself at all, but appears willingly in the sight of good people. Finally, the honey of Heraclea leaves a bitter taste in the mouth, so false friendships change and terminate in carnal and foul words and requests, or, in case of refusal, in injuries, calumnies, deceptions, sadness, vexations and jealousies, which end very often in brutishness



and madness; but chaste friendship is always uniformly modest, courteous and amiable, and only changes into a more perfect and purer union of spirits, a lively image of the blessed friendship which is enjoyed in heaven.

St Gregory Nazianzen says that the cry of the peacock, when he spreads his tail and struts about, greatly excites the peahens to lechery: when we see a man play the peacock, deck himself out and come in that way, flatter, whisper and simper in the ears of a woman or of a girl, without any intention of an honourable marriage, ah! without doubt, it is only to tempt her to some impurity; and the woman of honour will *stop her ears*, so as not to hear the cry of this peacock, and *the voice of the charmer* who wishes to *charm her artfully*.<sup>\*</sup> But if she listen, O God! what a bad augury it is of the future ruin of her heart.

Young people who indulge in airs, attitudes and caresses, or speak words which they would not wish their fathers, mothers, husbands, wives or confessors to overhear, testify therein that they treat of some other thing than honour and conscience. Our Lady was troubled at seeing an Angel in human form, because she was alone, and because he gave her excessive though heavenly praise: O Saviour of the world, purity fears an Angel in human form, and why then will not impurity fear a man, even though he have the form of an Angel, when he praises her with sensual and human praises?

## CHAPTER XXI

### COUNSELS AND REMEDIES AGAINST EVIL FRIENDSHIPS

BUT what remedies are there against this brood and spawn of foolish loves, wantonness and impurities? As soon as you experience the first touches of them,

<sup>\*</sup> Ps. lvii 6.

turn the other way, and with an absolute detestation of this vanity, run to the cross of the Saviour, and take his crown of thorns to put it about your heart, so that these little foxes may not approach it. Be careful not to enter into any sort of understanding with the enemy; do not say: I will listen to him, but I will not do anything that he says to me; I will lend him my ear, but I will refuse him my heart. O my Philothea, for God's sake, be strict on such occasions: the heart and the ears are intimately connected with one another, and as it is impossible to stop a torrent which has begun its descent down the slope of a mountain, so is it difficult to prevent the love that falls into the ear from continuing its downward course straight into the heart. Goats, according to Alcmaeon (though Aristotle denies it), breathe through their ears and not through their nostrils. However, be that as it may, I know very well that our heart breathes through the ear, and that, as it breathes forth and exhales its thoughts by the tongue, it inhales also by the ear, by which it receives the thoughts of others. Let us therefore carefully shield our ears from the air of foolish words, for otherwise our heart will soon become tainted thereby. Do not listen to any suggestions of the kind, no matter what the pretext may be: in this case alone there is no danger of being rude and unmannerly.

Remember that you have vowed your heart to God, and that, since you have made a sacrifice of your love to him, it would be a sacrilege to deprive him of even a small part of it; rather offer it to him again in sacrifice by a thousand resolutions and protestations, and, sheltering yourself therein like a stag within its covert, call upon God; he will help you, and his love will take yours under its protection, so that it may live for him alone.

But if you be already taken in the snares of these foolish loves, O God! what difficulty you will have in freeing yourself from them! Place yourself

before his divine Majesty; acknowledge in his presence the greatness of your misery, your frailty and vanity; then with the greatest effort of which your heart is capable, detest these incipient loves, abjure the foolish declaration which you have made of them, renounce all the promises received, and with a firm and unqualified act of your will, determine in your heart and resolve never again to take part in these toyings and dalliances of love.

If you are able to go to a distance from the object of your affection, I would strongly recommend it; for as those who have been bitten by serpents cannot easily be cured in the presence of those who have themselves been bitten in the same way, so the person stung with love will find it difficult to be healed of this passion while remaining near the other who has been stung with the same sting. Change of scene is a very great help to alleviate the heat and restlessness, whether of sorrow or of love. The boy of whom St Ambrose speaks in the second book of *de Poenitentiâ*, having made a long voyage, returned wholly freed from the foolish loves in which he had indulged, and so changed, that when the foolish woman met him and said: "Dost thou not know me? I am still the same," he replied: "Yes, indeed, but I am not the same." Absence had brought about this happy change in him. And St Augustine testifies that in order to alleviate the sorrow which he felt at the death of his friend, he left Tagaste where the death had taken place, and went away to Carthage.

But what is he to do that is not able to go away? He must altogether renounce all private interviews, all secret intercourse, all looks of affection, all smiles, and in general, every kind of intercourse and attraction that can feed this reeky and smoky fire; or at most, if he be forced to speak to his accomplice, let it be to declare, by a bold, brief and stern protestation, the eternal separation which he has sworn. I

cry aloud to all that have fallen into these flirtatious snares: Cut, hew, break; you must not waste time over unstitching these foolish friendships, you must tear them asunder; you must not unfasten the bonds, you must break them or cut them, more especially since the cords and bonds are of no value. You must have no consideration for a love which is so contrary to the love of God.

But after I have thus broken the chains of this infamous bondage, will there not remain some remembrance thereof, and will not the marks and prints of the irons be stamped upon my feet—that is to say, in my affections? No, Philothea, it will not be so, if you have conceived as much hatred for the evil as it deserves; for in that case, you will not be moved by any feeling but that of an extreme horror of this infamous love, and of all that is connected with it, and you will remain freed from all other affection towards the object which you have forsaken, but that of a very pure charity for the sake of God. But if, by reason of the imperfection of your repentance, there still remain some evil inclinations in your heart, make a spiritual solitude for your soul, as I have taught you previously, and retire thither as often as you can, and by a thousand repeated movements of your spirit, renounce all your inclinations; reject them with all your strength; read holy books more than usual; go to confession more frequently than you are accustomed to do, and to Holy Communion; confer humbly and sincerely on all the suggestions and temptations which you experience in this matter, with your director, if you can, or at least with some faithful and prudent soul; and do not doubt that God will free you from all your inclinations, provided that you persevere faithfully in these exercises.

Ah! you will say to me, but will it not be ingratitude so ruthlessly to break a friendship? Oh! how blessed is the ingratitude which makes us pleasing to God! No, in the name of God, Philothea, it will

not be ingratitude, but a great boon that you will confer on the other party; for in breaking your bond you will break his also, since they were common to you both; and though for a time he may not appreciate his happiness, he will realize it sooner or later, and will sing with you in thanksgiving: *O Lord, thou hast broken my bonds; I will offer thee the sacrifice of praise, and I will call upon thy holy Name.\**

## CHAPTER XXII

### SOME FURTHER COUNSELS ON THE SUBJECT OF FRIENDSHIPS

FRIENDSHIP requires much intercourse between friends, otherwise it cannot begin nor subsist. And therefore it very often happens that, together with the things that are interchanged in friendship, many other things pass and glide insensibly from heart to heart by a mutual infusion and reciprocal flow of affections. But especially is this the case, when we have a great esteem for the person loved; for then we open our heart so readily to the friendship, that with it his inclinations and impressions easily enter in their entirety, whether they be good or bad. Certainly the bees that gather the honey of Heraclea seek but the honey, yet with the honey they unwittingly suck the poisonous qualities of the aconite, from which they gather it. Well then, Philothea, in this matter we must put in practice the word which the Saviour of our souls was wont to say: "Be good exchangers and moneyers"—that is to say, do not receive false money with the good, nor alloyed gold with the unalloyed; *separate the precious from the vile;*† yes, for there is scarcely anyone without some imperfection. And why should we receive promiscuously the defects and imperfections of a friend together with the friendship? We must

\* Ps. cxv 7.

† Jer. xv 19.



indeed love our friends notwithstanding their imperfections, but we must neither love nor receive their imperfections; for friendship requires the interchange of good and not of evil. Therefore, as those who get gravel out of the Tagus, sift out from it the gold which they find there, to carry it away and leave the gravel upon the bank, so those who enjoy the intercourse of a good friendship ought to separate out from it the gravel of imperfections, and not allow them to enter into their souls. Certainly St Gregory Nazianzen testifies that many, loving and admiring St Basil, were carried away so far as to imitate him, even in his exterior imperfections, in his manner of speaking slowly, absent-mindedly and pensively, in the shape of his beard and in his gait. And we see husbands, wives, children, friends, who, having a great esteem for their friends, their fathers, their husbands and their wives, acquire either by condescension or by imitation, a thousand little imperfections from the intercourse of the friendship which they have with one another. Now this ought not to be so, for everyone has evil inclinations enough of his own, without charging himself with those of others; and not only does friendship not require this, but, on the contrary, it obliges us to help one another to be freed from every kind of imperfection. We must indeed patiently bear with a friend in his imperfections, but not encourage him in them, and much less transfer them to ourselves.

But I am speaking only of imperfections; for as to sins we must neither encourage them nor tolerate them in a friend. It is either a weak or an evil friendship that sees a friend perishing and gives him no help, that sees him dying of an abscess, and dares not give him the lancet-stroke of correction to save him. True and living friendship cannot endure in the midst of sins. It is said that the salamander extinguishes the fire in which it abides; and sin ruins the friendship in which it takes up its abode.



If it be a passing sin, the friendship puts it to flight straightway by correction; but if it sojourn and abide, straightway the friendship perishes, for it can only exist where there is true virtue. How much less ought we to sin for friendship's sake! A friend is an enemy when he would lead us into sin, and deserves to lose the friendship when he would ruin and damn the friend; but it is one of the most certain marks of a false friendship, when we see it kept up with a vicious person, no matter what the nature of the sin may be. If our friend is a vicious person, without doubt our friendship is vicious; for since it cannot rest upon true virtue, it must needs rest upon some superficial virtue and some sensual quality.

A society formed by merchants for the sake of temporal profit has only the semblance of true friendship; for it rests not upon the love of persons, but upon the love of gain.

In fine, these two divine sayings are two strong pillars for the support of the Christian life. One is that of the Wise Man: *He that feareth God shall likewise have good friendship*;<sup>\*</sup> and the other is that of St James: *The friendship of the world is the enemy of God*.<sup>†</sup>

## CHAPTER XXIII

### OF THE EXERCISES OF EXTERIOR MORTIFICATION

THOSE who treat of husbandry and rural matters tell us that, if some word be written upon an almond that is quite sound, and if it be put back in its covering, which is carefully folded and wrapt about it, and then placed in the soil, all the fruit of the tree which grows from it will have this same word written and engraved upon it. For my part, Philothea, I have never been able to approve of the method of those who, to reform a man, begin with the exterior—

<sup>\*</sup> Eccus. vi 17.

<sup>†</sup> Chap. iv 4.

with the deportment, with the clothes, with the hair.

On the contrary, it seems to me that we must begin with the interior: *Be converted to me*, says God, *with all your heart*.<sup>\*</sup> *My son, give me thy heart*;<sup>†</sup> for the heart being the source of our actions, they are such as is the heart. The divine Spouse in his invitation to the soul says: *Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm*.<sup>‡</sup> Yes, truly, for whosoever has Jesus Christ in his heart, has him soon afterwards in all his exterior actions.

For this cause, dear Philothea, I have desired above all things to engrave and inscribe this holy and sacred word upon your heart: *Vive Jesus!* since I am confident that thereafter your life, which comes from your heart, as an almond-tree from its kernel, will have all its actions, which are its fruits, stamped and engraved with this same word of salvation; and that, as this sweet Jesus will live within your heart, he will live also in all your actions, and will appear in your eyes, in your mouth, in your hands, yea, even in your hair; and you will be able reverently to say, in imitation of St Paul: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me*.<sup>§</sup> In short, he that has gained the heart of a man has gained the whole man. But this same heart, with which we would begin, needs to be instructed how to form its exterior bearing and behaviour, so that others may see in them not only holy devotion, but also great wisdom and discretion. To this end I will briefly give you some counsels.

If you are able to bear fasting, you will do well to fast some days in addition to those commanded by the Church; for besides the ordinary effect of fasting, which is to elevate the spirit, subdue the flesh, practise virtue and acquire a greater reward in heaven, it is a very good thing to keep alive within ourselves the power of curbing gluttony, and of

\* Joel ii 12.

‡ Cant. viii 6.

† Prov. xxiii 26.

§ Gal. ii 20.

keeping the sensual appetite and the body subject to the law of the spirit; and even though we do not fast much, nevertheless the enemy fears us more when he sees that we know how to fast. Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays are the days on which the early Christians practised abstinence the most: take, then, some of them as fast days, in so far as your devotion and the discretion of your director may counsel you.

I would willingly say as St Jerome said to the good lady Laeta: "Long and immoderate fasts displease me very much, especially in those that are yet tender in years. I have learnt by experience that the little ass, when it is tired on a journey, seeks to turn aside from the way"—that is to say, young persons whose health has been impaired by excessive fasting, readily turn to daintiness. Stags run badly at two seasons—when they are too fat, and when they are too lean. We are greatly exposed to temptations when our body is too much pampered, and when it is too much weakened; for the one makes the body insolent in its comfort, and the other makes it desperate in its discomfort; and as we cannot carry it when it is too fat, so it cannot carry us when it is too lean. The want of this moderation in fasting, taking the discipline, wearing the hair-shirt and other austerities, makes the best years of many useless in the service of charity, as it did even in St Bernard, who repented him of having practised excessive austerities; and inasmuch as they have maltreated it in the beginning, they are forced to pamper it in the end. Would they not have done better to have treated it fairly and in a manner suitable to the duties and works to which their condition of life obliged them?

Fasting and work subdue the flesh and bring it under. If the work that you do be necessary for you, or if it be very useful to the glory of God, I would rather that you should suffer the labour of the work than that of the fasting: this is the mind of

the Church, which, for works useful to the service of God and our neighbour, releases those that do them from the obligation of fasting, even when it is commanded. The one has the labour in the fasting, the other has it in serving the sick, visiting prisoners, hearing confessions, preaching, helping the afflicted, praying and such-like exercises; the latter labour is worth more than the former; for besides subduing the body to a like extent, it has much more desirable fruits. And therefore, generally, it is better to keep up our bodily strength more than is required, than to weaken it more than we need; for we can always reduce it when we will, but we cannot always restore it when we will.

I think that we should greatly reverence the words which our Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples: *Eat such things as are set before you.*\* It is, in my opinion, a greater virtue to eat without choice what is set before you, and in the order in which it is set before you, whether it be to your liking or not, than always to choose the worst. For, although this latter way of living seems more austere, nevertheless the other has more resignation in it, for thereby we renounce not only our own taste, but also our own choice; and assuredly it is no slight austerity to turn our taste about every way, and keep it subject to whatever it meets with; and, moreover, this kind of mortification makes no show, inconveniences no one, and is singularly suited to life in the world. To refuse one dish in order to take another, to taste and pick at everything, to find nothing well prepared or properly clean, to make mysteries at every mouthful, all this betokens a heart which is soft and attentive to the dishes and platters. I deem it a greater virtue in St Bernard that he drank oil instead of water or wine, than if he had drunk wormwood water on purpose; for it showed that he paid no attention to what he was drinking. And

\* Luke x 8.

in this indifference to what we eat and drink lies the perfect practice of this holy saying: *Eat such things as are set before you*. I except, however, meats that are prejudicial to the health, or that even trouble the spirit, such as meats that are hot and highly seasoned, heady and flatulent, which do not agree with many persons; and likewise certain occasions when nature has need of being refreshed and aided, in order to be able to carry on some work for the glory of God. A continual and moderate sobriety is better than immoderate abstinences practised from time to time, and alternated with great relaxations.

The discipline is of wonderful efficacy for stirring up the desire of devotion, if it be taken with moderation. The hair-shirt subdues the flesh powerfully; but its use is not ordinarily suitable for married persons, or for delicate constitutions, or for those who have to endure great labours of other kinds. It is true that on the more notable days of penance it may be used with the approval of a discreet confessor.

We should make use of the night for sleep, each one according to his constitution, so far as is necessary for being usefully awake during the day. And because Holy Scripture, in a hundred ways, the examples of the Saints, and natural reasons strongly recommend the morning as the best and most fruitful part of the day, and because our Lord himself is called *the Orient*,\* and our Lady *the dawn of day*,† I think that there is virtue in the care which we take to go to bed betimes in the evening, in order to awake and arise early in the morning. Certainly the early morning is the most beautiful, the most agreeable, and the least distracted time of the day; the very birds do then invite us to awake and praise God: so that early rising is helpful both to health and to holiness.

Balaam mounted on his ass went in search of

\*.Zach. iii 8.

† Cant. vi 9.



Balac;\* but because he had not a right intention, the Angel awaited him in the way with a sword in his hand to slay him. The ass, seeing the Angel, stopped three different times as though from stubbornness; Balaam, however, beat her cruelly with his staff to make her go on, until the third time, when falling down altogether under Balaam, she spoke to him by a great miracle, saying: *What have I done to thee? Why strikest thou me now this third time?* And soon after the eyes of Balaam were opened, and he saw the Angel, who said to him: *Why hast thou beaten thy ass? Unless she had turned out of the way before me, I had slain thee* and had spared her. Then Balaam said to the Angel: Lord, *I have sinned not knowing that thou didst stand before me in the way.* See you, Philothea, Balaam is the cause of the evil, and he strikes and beats the poor ass, which cannot help it.

It is often so with us; for this woman sees her husband or her child ill, and straightway she betakes herself to fasting, to the hair-shirt, to the discipline, as David did on a like occasion. Alas! dear friend, you beat the poor ass, you afflict your body, and it cannot help your trouble, nor is it the cause that God's sword is drawn against you; correct your heart which idolizes the husband, and which indulged the child in a thousand faults, and was paving the way for it to pride, to vanity and to ambition. This man sees that he often falls grievously into the sin of impurity: inward remorse, sword in hand, goes to meet his conscience, in order to pierce it through with holy fear; and straightway his heart coming to itself cries out: Ah! felon flesh, ah! traitorous body, thou hast betrayed me; and so he falls incontinently upon this flesh with great blows, with immoderate fasting, with excessive use of the discipline, with insupportable hair-shirts. O poor soul, if thy flesh could speak like the ass of Balaam, it would say to thee: Wherefore, wretch, dost thou strike me?

\* Num. xxii 21-34.

It is against thee, O my soul, that God has armed his vengeance, it is thou that art the criminal; why dost thou lead me into bad company? Why dost thou make use of my eyes, my hands, my lips for lewd purposes? Why dost thou trouble me with evil imaginations? Have good thoughts, and I shall not then have evil movements; associate with modest persons, and I shall not then be disturbed by my concupiscence. Alas ! it is thou, that castest me into the fire, and thou dost not want me to burn; thou throwest smoke in my eyes, and thou dost not want them to be inflamed. And God without doubt says to you in these cases: Beat, break, *rend*, crush *your hearts*\* principally, for it is against them that my wrath is kindled. Certainly, to cure the itch, there is not so much need to wash and bathe oneself, as to purify the blood and refresh the liver; so, to cure ourselves of our sinful habits, it is indeed good to mortify the flesh, but it is above all necessary thoroughly to purify our perfections and refresh our hearts. And in any case, we should never undertake corporal austerities without the counsel of our spiritual guide.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### OF SOCIETY AND OF SOLITUDE

To seek the society of others and to shun it are two blameworthy extremes in the devotion of those who live in the world, and it is of this that I speak. To shun the society of others savours of disdain and contempt for our neighbour, and to seek it is a sign of idleness and futility: you must love your neighbour as yourself: to show that you love him, you must not avoid being with him, and to show that you love yourself, you must remain within yourself when you are there. Now you are within yourself when you are alone. Think of thyself, says St Bernard, and

\* Joel ii 13.

then of others. If then there is no cause for you to seek the company of others, or to receive it at home, remain within yourself and hold converse with your heart; but if company come to you, or some good reason invite you to seek it, go in God's name, Philothea, and see your neighbour willingly and cheerfully.

We call that company bad which is gathered together for some evil intention, or when those who take part in it are vicious, indiscreet and dissolute; and from such company we must turn aside, as the bees turn aside from a swarm of gad-flies and hornets. For, as those that have been bitten by mad dogs have their sweat, breath and saliva infectious, especially for children and persons of a delicate constitution, so it is not possible to associate with vicious and dissolute persons without risk and peril, especially for those whose devotion is still tender and delicate.

There are some occasions of social intercourse which are profitable for nothing but recreation, and which take place merely by way of diversion from serious occupations; and as to these, just as we ought not to give ourselves up to them, so we may devote to them the leisure meant for recreation.

Other occasions of social intercourse have civility for their end, such as mutual visits and certain meetings which are for the purpose of honouring our neighbour; and as to these, just as we must not be too scrupulously exact in fulfilling them, so we must not be so impolite as to neglect them, but we should do our duty therein with modesty, so as to avoid boorishness on the one hand, and scrupulousness on the other.

There remain the profitable occasions of social intercourse, such as those with devout and virtuous persons; O Philothea, it will always be a great good for you often to meet with such. The vine when planted among olive-trees bears luscious grapes that have a flavour of olives; and a soul that is often among

virtuous persons cannot fail to participate in their qualities. The drones cannot make honey by themselves, but with the bees they help to make it; and it is of great profit to us in the practice of devotion to have intercourse with devout souls.

In all social intercourse, candour, simplicity, gentleness and modesty are always to be desired. There are persons who make no kind of gesture or movement without so much affectation that everyone is annoyed thereby; and as he that would never walk without counting his steps, nor speak without singing would annoy others, so those who put on an affected manner, and who do nothing but by measure, are very troublesome in social intercourse, and in such persons there is always some sort of presumption. A moderate joy should ordinarily predominate in our intercourse with others. St Romuald and St Antony are much praised because, notwithstanding all their austerities, they displayed joy, gaiety and courtesy in their behaviour and in their words. *Rejoice with them that rejoice* :\* and I say to you *again* with the Apostle:† *Rejoice always, but in the Lord, and let your modesty be known to all men.* In order to rejoice in the Lord, the subject of your joy must be not only lawful, but befitting: and I say this, because there are some lawful things which are not befitting; and in order that your modesty may appear, refrain from rudeness which is always reprehensible: to trip up one, to make another dirty, to prick a third, to play some trick upon a half-witted person, such things are foolish and impertinent jokes and amusements.

But always, besides the mental solitude to which you can retire amidst the most important affairs, as I have described above, you should love actual solitude of place; not to retire into the desert, like St Mary of Egypt, St Paul, St Antony, Arsenius and the other Fathers of the desert, but to be alone for a little while in your chamber, in your garden and

\* Rom. xii 15.

† Phil. iv 4, 5.

elsewhere, where more at will you may withdraw your spirit into your heart, and recreate your soul with good reflections and holy thoughts, or with a little good reading, after the example of the great Bishop Nazianzen, who, speaking of himself, said: "I used to walk by myself about sunset and used to spend my time by the sea-shore; for I was accustomed to make use of this recreation to refresh myself, and to shake off some of my ordinary troubles;" and, thereupon, he proceeds to tell of the good thoughts which he had, of which I have spoken to you elsewhere; and after the example of St Ambrose, of whom St Augustine says, that often when he entered into his room (for entrance was denied to no one) he found him reading; and after having waited for some time, for fear of disturbing him, he went away without saying a word, thinking that the little time which this great pastor had for the reinvigoration and refreshment of his spirit, after the preoccupations of such a multitude of affairs, ought not to be taken away from him. Also, after the Apostles one day had related to our Lord how they had preached, and how much they had done, he said to them: *Come apart into a desert place and rest a little.*\*

## CHAPTER XXV

### OF PROPRIETY IN ATTIRE

ST PAUL wishes devout women (and the same must be understood of men) to be clothed *in decent apparel, adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety.*† Now the propriety of attire and other ornaments depends on the material, the form and the cleanliness. As to cleanliness, our clothes ought to be uniformly clean, and, as far as possible, we should not allow any sort of stains and dirt to remain upon them. Exterior cleanliness reflects in some wise interior

\* Mark vi 31.

† Tim. ii 9, 10.



probity. God himself demands bodily cleanliness in those that approach his altars, and have the chief care of devotion.

As to the material and the form of clothes, propriety is determined by various circumstances of time, of age, of condition of life, of company, of occasion. Ordinarily we dress better on feast-days according to the importance of the festival; in seasons of penance, as in Lent, we lay aside fine apparel to a great extent; at weddings we wear wedding garments, and at funerals mourning; in the company of princes we put on richer garments, which we put off when we are at home. A married woman may and ought to adorn herself when she is with her husband, and he desires it; if she do so when she is at a distance from him, people will ask what eyes she wishes to please by this particular care. More finery is allowed to girls, because they can quite lawfully seek to please many, although they should only do so in order to win one by holy marriage. Neither is it wrong for marriageable widows to adorn themselves somewhat, provided that they display no light-mindedness, because, since they have already been mothers of a family, and have passed through the sorrows of widowhood, they are considered to be more mature and well-regulated in spirit. But as to true widows, who are such not only in body but also in heart, no ornaments become them, but humility, modesty and devotion; for if they wish to bestow love on men, they are not true widows, and if they do not wish to bestow it, why do they wear the trappings thereof? He that does not wish to receive lodgers, must take down the sign-board from his house. We laugh at old people when they wish to pass for beautiful: it is a foolishness which is to be tolerated only in youth.

Be neat, Philothea; let there be nothing untidy about you, or that fits badly, for it is a slight to those among whom we live, to appear among them

in unsightly attire; but be on your guard against affectation, vanity, singularity and levity. Always keep as much as possible on the side of simplicity and modesty, which is without doubt the best adornment of beauty and the best excuse for plainness. St Peter\* warns young women especially not to wear their *hair* so crisped, frizzled, curled and *plaited*. Men who are so foolish as to occupy themselves with these vanities are ever decried as effeminate, and vain women are held to be weak in chastity; at all events, if they have any, it is not visible amid so much trash and so many baubles. They say that they mean no evil in these things, but I answer, as I have said elsewhere, that the devil always means evil therein. For my part, I would have my devout persons, whether men or women, the best dressed of the company, but with the least pomp and affectation, and, as is said in the book of Proverbs,† adorned with good taste, propriety and dignity. St Louis says in one word, that “each one ought to dress according to his condition of life, so that the wise and good may not be able to say: You do too much, nor young persons: You do too little.” But should the young be unwilling to rest satisfied with propriety, we must abide by the counsel of the wise.

## CHAPTER XXVI

OF SPEECH; AND FIRST, HOW TO SPEAK  
OF GOD

DOCTORS derive much knowledge of the health or sickness of a man by looking at his tongue; and our words are true indications of the qualities of our souls: *By thy words*, says the Saviour,‡ *thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*. We place our hand readily enough on the pain that we feel, and our tongue on the love that we have.

\* 1 Pet. iii 3.

† Chap. xxxi 25.

‡ Matt. xii 37.

If, then, you love God truly, Philothea, you will often speak of God in the familiar talks which you have with the members of your household, with your friends and with your neighbours: yes, for *the mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom: and his tongue shall speak judgement*.<sup>\*</sup> And as the bees do not extract anything but honey with their little mouths, so your tongue will be always honeyed, as it were, with God, and will have no greater sweetness than to feel the praises and blessings of his name flow between your lips, as it is said of St Francis, who, when he pronounced the holy name of the Lord, used to suck and lick his lips, as though to draw therefrom the greatest sweetness in the world.

But always speak of God as of God, not playing the self-sufficient person or the preacher, but with the spirit of sweetness, charity and humility, letting fall as far as you can (as it is said of the Spouse in the Cantic of Canticles†) the delicious honey of devotion, drop by drop, now into the ear of one, now into the ear of another, praying God secretly in your soul that it may please him to make this holy dew pass into the hearts of those that hear you.

Above all, you must perform this angelic office gently and sweetly, not as though to correct others, but by way of suggestion; for it is wonderful how powerfully the sweet and amiable setting forth of some good thing is able to influence hearts.

Never, therefore, speak of God or of devotion thoughtlessly and merely for the sake of talking, but always with attention and devotion; which I say, to put you on your guard against a form of vanity that is found in many who make profession of devotion, and who upon every occasion utter holy and fervent words as a matter of course, and without any thought of what they say; and after they have spoken them, they imagine themselves to be such as their words testify; which is by no means the case.

\* Ps. xxxvi 30.

† Chap iv 11.

## CHAPTER XXVII

OF PROPRIETY IN WORDS, AND OF THE  
RESPECT WHICH WE OWE TO OTHERS

*IF anyone offend not in word, says St James,\* the same is a perfect man.* Take great care not to speak any unseemly words; for though you may not say them with a bad intention, yet those that hear them may put a different construction upon them. An improper word falling into a weak heart spreads itself out and expands like a drop of oil upon a cloth; and sometimes it so takes possession of the heart that it fills it with a thousand unclean thoughts and suggestions. For, as the poison of the body enters by the mouth, so that of the heart enters by the ear, and the person that utters the poisonous word is a murderer. For even though perchance the poison which his tongue administers may not produce its effect, because it finds the hearts of the hearers fortified by some antidote, yet it was not due to want of malice on his part that his tongue has not caused them to die. And let no one say that he intends no evil, for our Lord, who knows the thoughts of men, has said that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;*† and even though we may intend no evil, yet the evil one intends much, and he always makes use secretly of these bad words, to wound the heart of someone with them. It is said that those who have eaten the herb called *angelica* always have their breath sweet and agreeable; and those who have in their hearts modesty and chastity, which is the angelic virtue, always have their words clean, proper and modest. As to indecent and unclean things, the Apostle will not allow them *to be so much as named,*‡ assuring us that nothing so *corrupts good manners as evil communications.*§

\* Chap. iii 2.

‡ Eph. v 3.

† Matt. xii 34.

§ 1 Cor. xv 33.

If these improper words be spoken ambiguously, with pretence and subtlety, they are infinitely more poisonous; for, just as the more sharply pointed a dart is, the more easily does it enter into our bodies, so the more sharply pointed an evil word is, the more deeply does it penetrate into our hearts. And those who imagine themselves to be men of the world by uttering such words in conversation, do not understand the meaning of social gatherings; for they ought to be like swarms of bees gathered together to make the honey of some sweet and virtuous conversation, and not like a number of wasps which come together to feed on putrid matter. If some fool speak improper words to you, show him that your ears are offended by them, either by turning away, or by some other means, as your prudence may suggest to you.

One of the worst conditions that a person can be in is to be a scoffer: God hates this vice extremely, and has in the past inflicted strange punishments for it. Nothing is so contrary to charity, and much more to devotion, as contempt and scorn for our neighbour. Now derision and mockery can never be indulged in without this contempt; and therefore it is a very grave sin, so that theologians are right in saying that mockery is the worst sort of offence that we can commit against our neighbour by words, because other offences are committed with some esteem of him who is offended, but this is committed with contempt and scorn.

But as to playful words which are spoken with a modest gaiety and mirth, they belong to the virtue called *eutrapelia* by the Greeks, and which we might call geniality; and by this means we derive a good and pleasant recreation from the opportunities of mirth, which human imperfections supply. But we must be on our guard against passing from this honest mirth to mockery. Now mockery provokes laughter by scorn and contempt of our neighbour;



but honest gaiety and pleasantry provoke laughter by an innocent liberty, confidence and homely freedom, connected with the playful wittiness of some saying. St Louis, when religious persons wished to speak to him of serious things after dinner, used to say: It is not the time to discuss and cite authorities, but to recreate ourselves with mirth and *quolibets*.<sup>\*</sup> let each one say what he likes modestly. And he said this for the sake of the nobles who were gathered about him to receive favours from his Majesty. But, Philothea, let us so pass time by recreation that we may secure holy eternity by devotion.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## OF RASH JUDGEMENTS

*JUDGE not, and you shall not be judged,*<sup>†</sup> says the Saviour of our souls; *condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.* No, says the holy Apostle,<sup>‡</sup> *judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.* Oh! how displeasing to God are rash judgements! The judgements of the children of men are rash, because they are not judges one of another, and in judging they usurp the office of our Lord; they are rash, because the chief malice of sin depends on the intention and *counsel of the heart*, which is a *hidden thing of darkness* to us; they are rash, because each one has enough to do to judge himself, without undertaking to judge his neighbour. In order not to be judged ourselves, it is equally necessary for us not to judge others and to judge ourselves; for, as our Lord forbids the one, so the Apostle commands the other, saying: *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*<sup>§</sup> But, O God, we do just the contrary, for we cease not to

<sup>\*</sup> Puns, jests (from Latin *quodlibet*).

<sup>†</sup> Luke vi 37.

<sup>‡</sup> 1 Cor. iv<sup>th</sup> 5.

<sup>§</sup> 1 Cor. xi 31.

do what is forbidden, judging our neighbour at every turn; but we never do what is commanded, which is to judge ourselves.

We must seek remedies for rash judgements according to the causes from which they spring. There are some hearts sour, bitter and harsh by nature, that likewise make all that they receive sour and bitter, and turn (as the Prophet says) judgement into wormwood,\* never judging their neighbour but with rigour and harshness: these have great need to fall into the hands of a good spiritual physician, for this bitterness of heart being natural to them, it is difficult to overcome it; and though in itself it is not a sin, but only an imperfection, it is nevertheless dangerous, because it introduces rash judgement and slander into the soul, and causes them to reign there. Some judge rashly not from harshness but from pride, imagining that by how much they lower the honour of others, by so much they increase their own; arrogant and presumptuous spirits, who admire themselves, and place themselves so high in their own esteem, that they look upon everyone else as mean and inferior: *I am not as the rest of men*,† said the foolish Pharisee.

Others have not this manifest pride, but only a certain little complacency in considering the imperfections of others, in order the better to relish and cause others to relish the contrary perfections, with which they imagine themselves to be endowed; and this complacency is so secret and imperceptible, that without good sight we cannot discover it, and those persons themselves who suffer from it, are not aware of it, if it be not pointed out to them. Others, to justify their own conduct, and to deaden the remorse of conscience, are very ready to judge that others indulge in the sin to which they themselves are addicted, for they imagine that the multitude of offenders makes their sin less blameworthy. Many

\* Amos vi 13.

† Luke xviii 11.

indulge in rash judgements for the sole pleasure which they take in philosophizing and conjecturing in regard to the morals and dispositions of others, by way of exercising their intelligence; and if unfortunately they sometimes happen to be right in their judgement, their audacity and desire to continue increase so much in them, that it is very difficult to turn them from it. Others judge according to their feelings, and always think well of what they love, and ill of what they hate, except in a certain case, astonishing yet true, wherein excess of love provokes them to judge ill of what they love: a monstrous effect, but proceeding from an impure, imperfect, troubled and disordered love; and this is jealousy, which, as everyone knows, for a mere look, or for the least smile in the world, convicts persons of perfidy and of adultery. In fine, fear, ambition and such-like weaknesses of the spirit often contribute much towards the breeding of suspicion and rash judgement.

But what are the remedies? They who drink the juice of the Ethiopian herb *ophiura* imagine that they see everywhere serpents and dreadful things; and they who have swallowed pride, envy, ambition and hatred see nothing that they do not find evil and blameworthy; the former, to be healed, must drink palm wine, and I prescribe a similar remedy for the latter: drink as much as you can of the sacred wine of charity, which will free you from these evil humours that cause you to make these perverse judgements. So far is charity from going in search of evil, that she fears to meet it; and when she meets it, she turns away her face from it, and seems not to see it; nay, she even closes her eyes before seeing it, at the very first rumour of it that she hears, and then believes with a holy simplicity that it was not evil but only the shadow of evil or some phantom thereof; but if perforce she recognizes that it is evil, she turns away from it immediately and tries to

forget its form. Charity is the sovereign remedy for all evils, but especially for this. All things seem yellow to the eyes of them that are sick of the jaundice; it is said that, to be healed of this sickness, they should have celandine under the soles of their feet. Certainly this sin of rash judgement is a spiritual jaundice, which makes all things appear evil to them that are afflicted with it; but they that would be cured of it must apply the remedies not to the eyes, nor to the understanding, but to the affections, which are the feet of the soul: if your affections are well ordered, your judgement will be temperate; if they are charitable, your judgement will be the same.

I give you three admirable examples. Isaac had said that Rebecca was his sister; Abimelech saw him playing with her—that is to say, caressing her tenderly—and forthwith he judged that she was his wife; an evil-minded person would rather have judged her to be a strumpet, or, if she were his sister, to be incestuous; but Abimelech formed the most charitable opinion that he could of such an action. We must always do the same, Philothea, judging in favour of our neighbour, as far as is possible; and if it were possible for an action to have a hundred different aspects, we should look at it in that aspect which is the most favourable. Our Lady was with child, and St Joseph clearly perceived it; but because on the other hand he saw her all holy, all pure and all angelic, he could never believe that she was with child contrary to her duty, so that he resolved, by leaving her, to leave the judgement thereof to God; and though the evidence was strong to lead him to conceive a bad opinion of this virgin, yet he would not judge her by it. But why? *Because, says the Spirit of God, he was a just man.\** The just man, when he can no longer excuse either the deed or the intention of him, whom, moreover, he knows to be a good man, yet will not judge him, but puts the

\* Matt. i 19.

matter out of his mind and leaves the judgement thereof to God. Thus the crucified Saviour not being able to excuse the sin of them that crucified him, yet diminished the malice of it by pleading their ignorance. When we cannot excuse the sin, at all events let us make it worthy of compassion, by attributing to it the most extenuating cause which it can have, such as ignorance or infirmity.

But may we never, then, judge our neighbour? No, indeed, never; it is God, Philothea, who judges criminals in courts of justice. It is true that he makes use of the voice of magistrates in order to make himself intelligible to our ears; they are his spokesmen and interpreters, and should pronounce no judgement but what they have learnt of him, as being his oracles; and if they act otherwise, following their own feelings, then it is truly they who judge and who will consequently be judged themselves, for it is forbidden to men, as men, to judge others.

To see or know a thing, is not to judge it; for judgement, at least according to the words of Scripture, presupposes some little or great, some true or apparent, difficulty which must be decided; wherefore Scripture says that *they that believe not are already judged*,\* because there is no doubt of their damnation. It is not therefore wrong to doubt our neighbour, no, for we are not forbidden to doubt, but to judge; nevertheless, we are not allowed either to doubt or to suspect others except just so far as the reasons and the evidence furnish grounds for doubting; otherwise the doubts and suspicions are rash. If some evil-minded person had seen Jacob when he kissed Rachel at the well, or had seen Rebecca accept bracelets and ear-rings from Eliezer, a stranger in that country, he would doubtless have thought ill of these two models of chastity, but without reason and ground; for when an action is in itself indifferent, it is a rash suspicion to draw an

\* John iii 18.



evil conclusion from it, unless several circumstances give force to the argument.

It is also a rash judgement to draw a conclusion from one single act in order to blame a person; but I will speak of this more clearly later on.

In fine, those who keep careful watch over their consciences, are rarely subject to rash judgement; for as the bees, when they see mists or cloudy weather, retire within their hives to busy themselves with the honey, so the thoughts of good souls do not go forth after confused objects, nor do they wander among the obscure actions of their neighbours; but, to avoid meeting them, they retire within the heart to busy themselves there with the good resolutions of their own amendment. It is the part of a futile soul, to busy herself with examining the lives of others.

I except those who have charge of others, whether in the family or in the State; for a great part of their duty consists in noticing and watching over the conduct of others. Let them, therefore, do their duty with love; but beyond that, let them mind their own business in this respect.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### OF DETRACTION

RASH judgement breeds disquietude, contempt of our neighbour, pride and self-complacency, and a hundred other very pernicious effects, of which detraction is one of the worst, for it is a veritable pest of social intercourse. Oh ! that I had one of the live coals from the holy altar to touch the lips of men, that their *iniquities might be taken away and their sin cleansed*,\* in imitation of the Seraph who purified the mouth of Isaias ! He that could take away detraction from the world, would take away from it a great part of its sins and iniquities.

\* Isa. vi 6, 7.

Whosoever unjustly takes away his neighbour's good name, besides the sin which he commits, is bound to make reparation, though differently, according to the different kinds of detraction; for no one can enter Heaven with the goods of others, and among all exterior goods, reputation is the best. Detraction is a kind of murder, for we have three lives: the spiritual, which consists in the grace of God; the corporal, which consists in its animating principle, the soul; and the social, which consists in reputation; sin takes away the first from us, death the second, and detraction the third. But the detractor, by a single stroke of his tongue, ordinarily commits three murders: he kills his own soul and that of him who listens to him by a spiritual murder, and he takes away the social life of him whom he defames; for, as St Bernard says, he that defames another and he that listens to the defamation, both have the devil on them, but one has him on his tongue, and the other in his ear. David, speaking of detractors, said: *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent.\** Now a serpent's tongue is forked and has two points, as Aristotle says; and such is the tongue of the detractor, which with one stroke stings and poisons the ear of the listener and the reputation of him that is spoken against.

I implore you, therefore, dearest Philothea, never to defame anyone either directly or indirectly: be very careful not to impute false crimes and sins to your neighbour, nor to make known those that are secret, nor to exaggerate those that are manifest, nor to put a bad construction upon a good work, nor to deny the good that you know to be in a person, nor to ignore it out of malice, nor to diminish it by words; for in all these ways you would greatly offend God, but especially by accusing him falsely and denying the truth to the prejudice of your neighbour;

\* Ps. cxxxix 4.

for it is a double sin, at one and the same time, to lie and to injure your neighbour.

Those who, in order to commit detraction, begin by saying favourable things, or who mingle compliments and pleasant words with what they say, are the most subtle and venomous detractors of all. I protest, they say, that I love him, and that, for the rest, he is an honourable man; nevertheless, the truth must be told, he was wrong to commit such a breach of faith. She is a very virtuous girl, but she was surprised; and such-like little devices. Do you not see the artifice? He that would shoot with a bow, draws the arrow to himself as near as he can, but it is only to shoot it with greater force; and these detractors, so it seems, draw their detraction to themselves, but it is only to discharge it with greater force, so that it may penetrate more deeply into the hearts of their listeners. Detraction made in a witty manner is the most cruel of all; for, as hemlock is not of itself a very violent poison, and rather slow in its action, and one which can be easily remedied, but when taken with wine is irremediable, so the detraction, which of itself would pass lightly in at one ear and out again at the other, as they say, sticks fast in the brain of the listeners, when it is wrapped up in some clever and amusing jest. *They have*, says David, *the venom of asps under their lips*.<sup>\*</sup> The asp's sting is scarcely felt, and its poison at first causes a pleasant itching, by means of which the heart and the bowels expand and receive the poison, against which there is afterwards no remedy.

Do not say: such a one is a drunkard, although you have seen him drunk; nor: he is an adulterer, although he has been detected in this sin; nor: he is an incestuous man, although he has been discovered in this disgraceful act; for one single act does not give the name to the thing. The sun stood still once to favour the victory of Josue, and was

\* Pss. xiii 3; cxxxix 4.

darkened another time to favour that of the Saviour; but no one will say that it is either immovable or dark. Noe was drunk on one occasion, and Lot on another, and the latter was also guilty of a great act of incest; yet they were not drunkards, neither the one nor the other, and the latter was not an incestuous man; nor was St Peter a bloodthirsty man for having once shed blood, nor a blasphemer for having once blasphemed. To deserve the reputation of being addicted to some vice or devoted to some virtue, a person must have made some progress therein, and acquired a certain habit thereof; it is therefore untrue to say that a man is bad-tempered or a thief because we have seen him to be angry once, or to steal on one occasion.

Even though a man may have been vicious for a long time, yet we run a risk of lying when we call him vicious. Simon the leper called Magdalen a *sinner*,\* because she had been one not long before; nevertheless he did not speak the truth, for she was no longer a sinner, but a very holy penitent; and therefore our Lord spoke on her behalf. The foolish pharisee held the publican to be a great sinner, or perhaps to be *unjust, an adulterer, a ravisher*; but he was greatly deceived, for at that very time he was *justified*.† Alas! since the goodness of God is so great that one single moment suffices to obtain and receive his grace, what assurance can we have that a man who was a sinner yesterday is so to-day? Yesterday ought not to judge to-day, nor to-day judge yesterday: it is the last day alone that judges all. Therefore we can never say that a man is wicked without danger of lying; what we can say, if it be necessary to speak, is that he did some wicked act, that he lived badly during some definite period, that he is doing evil now; but we cannot draw any conclusion for to-day from yesterday, nor for yesterday from to-day, and still less for to-morrow.

\* Luke vii 39.

† Luke xviii 11, 14.

Although we must be extremely careful not to defame our neighbour, at the same time we must beware of the other extreme, into which some fall, who, to avoid detraction, praise and speak favourably of vice. If someone is truly a detractor, do not say, to excuse him, that he is outspoken and frank; if someone is a conceited showy person, do not say that he is generous and well-behaved; do not call dangerous familiarities innocent and harmless liberties; do not disguise disobedience with the name of zeal, nor arrogance with the name of sincerity, nor lasciviousness with the name of friendship. No, dear Philothea, we must not, under colour of avoiding the vice of detraction, favour, flatter or encourage the other vices, but we must plainly and frankly speak ill of evil, and blame things that are blameworthy: by acting thus, we glorify God, provided that we observe the following conditions.

That we may be justified in blaming the vices of others, it must be necessary to do so for the profit either of the person of whom we speak, or of those to whom we speak. I hear someone relating in the presence of girls the indiscreet familiarities of certain men and women, which are manifestly dangerous; the dissolute behaviour of some man or woman in words or in actions, which are manifestly wanton; if I do not openly blame this evil, and if I am willing to make excuses for it, these tender souls that listen to such talk will take occasion therefrom to indulge in the like themselves; and therefore their good requires that I should quite openly blame these things on the spot, unless I can defer this good office to another occasion, when I can blame these things more opportunely and with less harm to the persons in question.

Moreover, it is also requisite that it should be my place to speak on the matter, as, when I am among the first of the company present, so that, if I say nothing, I shall seem to approve the vice referred



to; for if I am one of the least, I ought not to take upon myself the office of passing censure. But, above all, I must be strictly just in my words, and not say a single word too much: for example, if I blame the familiarity of this young man and of this young woman, because it is too indiscreet and dangerous. O God, Philothea, I must hold the balance very evenly, in order not to exaggerate the matter, not even by a single hair-breadth. If there be only a slight suspicion, I will say no more than that; if there be only a little imprudence, I will confine my words to that; if there be neither imprudence, nor just grounds of suspicion, but only something in which a malicious spirit may find a pretext for detraction, either I will say nothing at all about it, or I will say but that and no more. My tongue, while I speak of my neighbour, is in my mouth like a lancet in the hand of the surgeon, who wishes to make an incision between the nerves and sinews: the incision that I make with my tongue must be so exact that I say neither more nor less than the truth. And in fine, you must, above all, take care, when blaming the vice, to spare as much as you can the person in whom it is.

It is true that we may speak freely of infamous, public and notorious sinners, provided that it be done with a spirit of charity and compassion, and not with arrogance and presumption, nor to take pleasure in the evil of others; for this is the mark of a mean and base spirit. I except altogether the declared enemies of God and of his Church; for these we must decry as much as we can; such as all heretical and schismatical sects, and their leaders: it is charity to cry out "wolf," when the wolf is among the sheep, and indeed wherever he may be.

Everyone gives himself the liberty to judge and censure princes, and to speak ill of whole nations, according to the diversity of feelings that men have in their regard. Philothea, do not commit this fault;

for besides the offence against God, it may involve you in numberless disputes.

When you hear a person spoken ill of, throw doubt upon the accusation, if you can do so justly; if you cannot do this, make an excuse for the intention of him that is accused; and if that cannot be done, show compassion for him, change the subject, calling to mind yourself, and reminding the company that those who do not fall owe it entirely to God. Recall the detractor to himself by some gentle means; say something good of the person defamed, if you know it.

## CHAPTER XXX

### SOME FURTHER COUNSELS IN REGARD TO SPEECH

LET your speech be gentle, frank, sincere, straightforward, candid and faithful. Beware of duplicity, artifice and dissimulation; for though it is not good always to say the whole truth, yet it is never lawful to say what is contrary to the truth. Accustom yourself never to lie wittingly, either by way of excuse or for any other reason, remembering that God is the *God of truth*.<sup>\*</sup> If you should tell a lie inadvertently, and are able to correct it on the spot by some explanation or reparation, do so: a genuine excuse has much more grace and exculpatory force than the lie.

Although we may sometimes discreetly and prudently disguise and cover the truth by some artifice of speech, yet we should only do so in a matter of importance, when the glory and service of God manifestly require it: in other cases artifices are dangerous, for, as holy Scripture<sup>†</sup> says, *the Holy Spirit will not abide in a deceitful and double-faced soul*. There is no artifice so good and desirable as simplicity. Worldly prudence and human artifice

\* Ps. xxx 6.

† Wisd. i 5.

belong to the children of this world; but the children of God walk straightforwardly, and have guileless hearts. *He that walketh sincerely*, says the Wise Man,\* *walketh confidently*. Lying, duplicity, dissimulation always indicate a feeble and mean spirit.

St Augustine had said in the fourth book of his *Confessions* that his soul and that of his friend were but one soul, and that this life was a horror to him after the death of his friend, because he did not wish to live by halves, and that also for this same reason he feared perchance to die, lest his friend should die wholly. These words afterwards seemed to him too artificial and affected, and therefore he retracted them in the book of his *Retractions*, and called them foolish. Observe, dear Philothea, how sensitive this holy and beautiful soul is to what savours of affectation in words. Indeed, fidelity, candour and sincerity in speech add much to the adornment of a Christian life. David said:† *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and a door round about my lips.*

It is a counsel of the King St Louis, to contradict no man, unless there be sin or much harm in agreeing with him: and this is to avoid all bickerings and disputes. Now, when it is necessary to contradict someone, and to set our own opinion against that of another, we must use great gentleness and tact, without any wish to constrain the spirit of another; for nothing is gained by handling things roughly. To speak little, so recommended by the sages of old, does not mean that we must say but few words, but that we must not speak many idle ones; for in this matter of speech, we look not at the quantity but at the quality. And it seems to me that we should avoid the two extremes; for to be too reserved and severe, refusing to contribute to the familiar talks which take place in social intercourse, would seem to show either lack of confidence or some sort of contempt;

\* Prov. x 9.

† Pss. xxxviii 1; cxi 3.

whilst to be always talking and chattering, without giving others either leisure or opportunity to speak when they would, savours of shallowness and levity.

St Louis did not approve of persons in company speaking secretly and confidentially with one another, and especially at table, lest it should make the others suspect that evil was being said of them. He used to say: "If anyone that is at table in good company has something merry and pleasant to say, he should say it so that all the company may hear it; if it is a thing of importance, let him not speak of it at all."

## CHAPTER XXXI

OF PASTIMES AND RECREATIONS; AND  
FIRST, OF SUCH AS ARE LAWFUL AND  
PRAISEWORTHY

It is necessary sometimes to refresh our spirit and our body also by some kind of recreation. Cassian relates that one day a hunter found St John the Evangelist holding a partridge in his hand which he was stroking by way of recreation; the hunter asked him how he, being so great a man, could waste his time upon a thing so mean and trivial; and St John said to him: "Why dost thou not always carry thy bow stretched?" "For fear," replied the hunter, "lest being always stretched, it should lose its power of resilience, which is essential to its usefulness." "Do not be astonished, then," replied the Apostle, "if I sometimes relax the application and attention of my spirit, to take a little recreation, in order to apply myself afterwards more earnestly to contemplation." There can be no doubt that it is a defect to be so rigorous, boorish and unsociable as not to be willing to take any recreation oneself, or permit others to do so.

To take the air, to go for a walk, to take part in cheerful and friendly conversations, to play the lute

or other instrument, to sing to the accompaniment of music, to go hunting, are recreations so proper that, to make a good use of them, we need only use ordinary prudence, which gives to all things order, time, place and measure.

Games in which the success serves as a reward and recompense for skill and industry of body or of mind are recreations good in themselves and lawful. Such are games of tennis, ball, pall-mall, tilting at the ring, chess, and backgammon. The only thing that we must guard against is excess, either in the time that we give to them, or in the stakes that are played for; for if we spend too much time in a game, it is no longer recreation, but occupation: we refresh neither our minds nor our bodies, but on the contrary, we depress and weary them. After playing five or six hours at chess, we are quite exhausted and weary in spirit: if we play for a long time at tennis, we do not refresh our bodies but weary them. Now, if the stakes that are played for be too great, the affections of the players become disordered; and besides this, it is not right to hazard so much upon skill and industry of such little importance and so useless as are those exercised in games.

But above all be careful, Philothea, not to set your affection on such things; for however proper a recreation may be, it is a defect to set your heart and affection on it. I do not say that we should not take pleasure in a game, whilst we are actually playing it, for otherwise it would not be a recreation; but I say that we must not set our affection on games to such an extent, that we long for them, occupy ourselves with them, and become too eager about them.



## CHAPTER XXXII

## OF FORBIDDEN GAMES

GAMES of dice, of cards and such-like, in which the success depends principally on chance, are not only dangerous recreations, like dances, but they are, when viewed in themselves and apart from other considerations, evil and blameworthy, and therefore they are forbidden by the laws, both civil and ecclesiastical. But, you will say to me, what great harm is there in them? Success in these games is not won according to reason, but according to chance, which very often favours him who, as far as skill and industry are concerned, deserves nothing; reason is outraged thereby. But, you will say to me, we agreed to it. That serves to show that he who wins does no wrong to the others, but it does not follow that the agreement is not unreasonable, and the game also; for the success which ought to be the reward of industry is made the reward of chance, which merits no reward, since it nowise depends upon us.

Besides this, these games bear the name of recreation, and are intended to serve that purpose; and yet they are by no means such, but rather engrossing occupations; for is it not an occupation to keep the mind occupied and strained by a continual attention, and agitated by continual anxiety, apprehension and solicitude? Is there any attention more sad, more gloomy and melancholy than that of gamblers? No one must speak, or laugh or cough while play is going on; otherwise they will be annoyed.

In fine, there is no joy at all in gambling, except for the winner, and is not this joy blameworthy, since it can only be had through the loss and displeasure of the loser? Such rejoicing is certainly unrighteous. For these three reasons games of chance are forbidden. The great King St Louis hearing that his brother the

Count of Anjou and Monsieur Gautier de Nemours were gambling, rose up, sick as he was, and went tottering to their chamber, and there he took the tables, the dice and part of the money, and threw them out of the window into the sea, being very angry with them. The holy and chaste maiden Sara, when speaking to God of her innocence, said: *Thou knowest, O Lord, that I have never joined myself with them that play.\**

## CHAPTER XXXIII

OF BALLS AND PASTIMES WHICH ARE  
PERMISSIBLE BUT DANGEROUS

DANCES and balls are things indifferent in themselves; but the ordinary way in which they are carried out makes them very much turned and inclined towards the side of evil, and consequently full of danger and peril. They take place at night, and in the darkness and obscurity it is easy for secret and sinful things to occur, in the case of those who of themselves are very susceptible to evil; they are prolonged far into the night, after which the mornings of the following days are lost, and consequently the means of serving God in them: in a word, it is always folly to change day into night, light into darkness, and good works into unprofitable ones. At a ball everyone vies with everyone else in vanity; and vanity is so great a disposition to evil affections, and to dangerous and reprehensible loves, that all this is easily engendered at dances.

I say to you of dances, Philothea, what physicians say of pumpkins and mushrooms; the best are of no value, so they say; and I say to you that the best balls can scarcely be called good. However, if you must eat pumpkins, take care that they are well prepared: if, on some occasion, when you cannot

\* Tob. iii 16, 17.

well excuse yourself, you must go to a ball, take care that your dancing be well ordered. But how is it to be well ordered? With modesty, with dignity and with a good intention. Eat mushrooms but seldom, say the physicians, and only eat a little, for however well prepared they may be, they are poisonous if taken in any quantity: dance but seldom, Philothea, and only a little, for if you act otherwise you will run a risk of setting your affection upon it.

Mushrooms, according to Pliny, being spongy and porous, easily absorb whatever infection may be near them, so that, if they are near to serpents, they absorb their poison. Balls, dances and such-like night-assemblies ordinarily attract the vices and sins that reign in a place, strife, envy, mockery, wanton love; and as these exercises open the pores of the bodies of those that take part in them, so they open the pores of the heart, with the result that, if some serpent thereupon breathe into the ear some lascivious suggestion, some frivolous words of love, some flattering speech, or if some basilisk indulge in unchaste looks, or wanton glances, the heart readily suffers itself to be seized upon and poisoned.

O Philothea, these unsuitable recreations are ordinarily dangerous: they dissipate the spirit of devotion, weaken the spiritual forces, cause charity to grow cold, and stir up in the soul all kinds of evil affections; and therefore they are to be used with great prudence.

But especially after eating mushrooms (so it is said) we should drink good wine; and I say that after dances, it is necessary to make use of some holy and good considerations, to counteract the dangerous impressions which the vain pleasure received at dances may have left within the soul. But what considerations?

1. At the very time when you were at the ball many souls were burning in hell-fire for sins committed at dances or on account of dances.

2. Many religious and persons of devotion were at that very time in the presence of God, singing his praises and contemplating his beauty. Oh, how much more profitably was their time spent than yours !

3. Whilst you were dancing, many persons were dying in great anguish; thousands of men and women were suffering great pains, in their beds, in the hospitals and in the streets, gout, gravel, burning fever. Alas ! they had no rest, and will you not have compassion on them ? And does it never come to your mind that one day you will groan like them, whilst others will be dancing, as you have done ?

4. Our Lord, our Lady, the Angels and the Saints beheld you at the ball: ah ! how much did they pity you, seeing your heart taken up with so vain an amusement and occupied with such trifles.

5. Alas ! while you were there, time was slipping by, and death was drawing nearer; see how he mocks you and invites you to his dance, in which the groans of your friends will be the music, and where you will make but one passage from life to death. This dance is the real pass-time of mortals, since by it they pass, in a moment, from time to an eternity either of happiness or of suffering.

I set down these little considerations for you, but God will suggest to you many others of a like kind, if you have his holy fear.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### WHEN WE MAY PLAY OR DANCE

THAT playing and dancing may be permissible, we should take part in such things for the sake of recreation and not merely from fondness of them; for a short time only, and not till we are wearied or languid; and but seldom, for whosoever makes a practice of doing so, turns recreation into occupation. But on what occasions may we play or dance ? Just occa-

sions of dancing and of games that are in themselves indifferent are more frequent; occasions of forbidden games are rarer, inasmuch as such games are much more blameworthy and dangerous. But, in a word, play and dance according to the conditions which I have laid down for you, when, to condescend and give pleasure to the company in which you find yourself, prudence and discretion counsel you to do so; for condescension, being an offshoot of charity, makes indifferent things good, and dangerous things permissible. It even takes away the harm from things which are in some wise evil: and therefore games of chance, which otherwise would be blameworthy, are not so, if sometimes right condescension lead us to take part in them.

It gave me much pleasure to read in the Life of St Charles Borromeo that he condescended to the Swiss in certain things, wherein otherwise he was very severe, and that blessed Ignatius of Loyola, when invited to play, accepted the invitation. As to St Elizabeth of Hungary, she played and danced sometimes, when she found herself in recreative assemblies, without prejudice to her devotion, which was so deeply rooted in her soul that, as the rocks which surround the lake of Rieti grow when they are beaten by the waves, so her devotion grew amid the pomps and vanities to which her state of life exposed her. Great fires are increased by the wind, but little ones are extinguished, if they be not well protected from it.

## CHAPTER XXXV

THAT WE MUST BE FAITHFUL BOTH ON  
GREAT AND ON SMALL OCCASIONS

THE sacred Bridegroom, in the Cantic of Canticles,\* says that his Spouse has ravished his *heart with one of her eyes, and with one hair of her neck*. Now,

\* Chap. iv 9.



among all the exterior parts of the human body, there is none more noble, whether for workmanship or for action, than the eye, and none more worthless than the hair, and therefore the divine Bridegroom means that not only are the great works of devout persons acceptable to him, but also the least and meanest; and that to serve him according to his liking, we must take great care to serve him well both in great and lofty things and in little and lowly things, since we can equally, both by the one and by the other, ravish his heart by love.

Be ready then, Philothea, to suffer many great afflictions for our Lord, and even martyrdom; resolve to give him all that is most precious to you, should it please him to take it—father, mother, brother, husband, wife, children, even your eyes and your life, for you ought to make ready your heart to endure all such things. But so long as his divine Providence does not send you such painful and such great afflictions, and does not demand of you your eyes, at least give him your hair—I mean, bear patiently the little injuries, the little inconveniences, the losses of trifling importance, which befall you daily; for by means of these little occasions made use of with love and dilection, you will entirely win his heart, and make it wholly yours. These little daily acts of charity, this headache, this toothache, this inflammation, this ill-humour of a husband or of a wife, this breaking of a glass, this contempt or this pouting, this loss of gloves, of a ring, of a handkerchief, this little inconvenience of going to bed betimes and of rising early to pray, to communicate, this little feeling of shame at doing certain acts of devotion in public—in a word, all these little sufferings, when accepted and embraced with love, are extremely pleasing to the goodness of God, who for *a glass of water*\* has promised the sea of perfect

\* Matt. x 42.

happiness to his faithful. And because these opportunities occur every moment, to make a good use of them is a great means of heaping up much spiritual riches.

When I read in the Life of St Catherine of Siena of so many raptures and transports of spirit, of so many words of wisdom, and even of sermons composed by her, I doubted not but that with this eye of contemplation she had ravished the heart of her celestial Spouse; but I was equally consoled, when I read of her working in her father's kitchen, humbly turning the spit, looking after the fire, cooking the food, kneading the bread, and performing all the lowliest household duties with a heart full of love and dilection towards her God. And I set no less value on the little and humble meditations which she was wont to make amidst these common and lowly duties than on the ecstasies and raptures which she had so often, and which were perhaps only given to her as a reward for this humility and abjection. Now she used to make her meditations in this wise: she imagined that, when she was cooking the meals for her father, she was doing so, like another Martha, for our Lord; that her mother took the place of our Lady, and her brothers that of the Apostles, stirring herself up in this way, to serve in spirit the whole court of heaven, and employing herself with great sweetness in this menial service, because she knew it to be the will of God. I have given you this example, my Philothea, in order that you may know how important it is rightly to direct all our actions, however lowly they may be, to the service of his divine Majesty.

To this end, I most earnestly counsel you to imitate the strong woman whom Solomon praises so highly, who, as he says, put out her hand to strong, generous and lofty things, and yet neglected not to spin and turn the spindle: *She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of*

*the spindle*.<sup>\*</sup> Put out your hand to *strong things*, exercising yourself in prayer and meditation, in frequenting the Sacraments, in giving the love of God to souls, in infusing good inspirations into hearts, and, in fine, in doing great and important works, according to your opportunities; but do not forget your *spindle*, and your distaff, that is to say—practise these little and humble virtues, which, like flowers, grow at the foot of the Cross: the service of the poor, the visitation of the sick, the care of the family, with the works which are comprised therein, and the profitable diligence which will never suffer you to be idle; and among all these things interperse considerations similar to those of which I have just spoken in the Life of St Catherine.

Great opportunities of serving God present themselves rarely, but little ones are common: now, *he that is faithful in that which is little*, says the Saviour himself, *shall be placed over many things*.<sup>†</sup> Do all things, then, in the name of God, and all things will be well done. *Whether you eat or drink*,<sup>‡</sup> or recreate yourself, or turn the spit, provided that you know how to turn your occupations to account, you will profit much in the sight of God, doing all these things because God wishes you to do them.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THAT WE MUST HAVE A JUST AND REASONABLE SPIRIT

WE are men only by our reason, and yet it is a rare thing to find men who are truly reasonable; because self-love ordinarily causes us to depart from the path of reason, leading us insensibly into a thousand kinds of little but dangerous acts of injustice and unfairness, which, like the *little foxes* that are spoken of in the

<sup>\*</sup> Prov. xxxi 19.

<sup>‡</sup> Coloss. iii 17.

<sup>†</sup> Matt. xxv 21.

Canticle of Canticles,\* *destroy the vines*; for, inasmuch as they are little, we pay no heed to them, and because they are many, they fail not to do much damage. Are not the things, of which I am now going to speak, unfair and unreasonable?

We accuse our neighbour for little, and we excuse ourselves in much; we wish to sell very dear and to buy very cheap; we want justice done in the house of another, and in our own we claim mercy and indulgence; we expect others to take our words in good part, and we are touchy and sensitive in regard to those of others. We want our neighbour to make over to us something of his, if we pay him the price thereof; is it not more just that he should keep what is his and leave us our money? We are vexed with him for not complying with our wishes; but has he not more reason to be angry with us for wishing to cause him inconvenience? If we are partial to one practice, we despise all the rest, and call in question everything that is not to our liking. If there is one of our inferiors that is not well-favoured, or for whom we have once conceived a dislike, whatever he may do, we take it amiss, we cease not to afflict him, and we are ever ready to find fault with him; on the contrary, if someone is pleasing to us because he is well-favoured, he can do nothing that we will not excuse. There are virtuous children whom their fathers and mothers can scarcely tolerate because of some bodily imperfection; there are vicious children who are their favourites because of some bodily comeliness.

In all things we prefer the rich to the poor, though they may be neither of better condition nor so virtuous; we even prefer the best dressed. We enforce our own rights strictly, but we expect others to be courteous in the exaction of theirs; we assert our own rank punctiliously, but we would have others humble and complaisant; we are ready enough

\* Chap. ii 15.

to complain of our neighbour, but we would not have anyone complain of us; what we do for others always seems much to us; what they do for us seems nothing to us. In a word, we are like the partridges of Paphlagonia, which have two hearts; for we have a gentle, gracious and courteous heart in regard to ourselves, but a hard, severe and rigorous heart in regard to our neighbour. We have two weights—one wherewith to weigh our own interests with the greatest disadvantage to ourselves, and the other wherewith to weigh those of our neighbour with the greatest advantage to him; now the Scripture says, *With deceitful lips and with a double heart have they spoken*\*—that is to say, they have two hearts; and *to have two weights*, the one heavy for receiving and the other light for giving, *is an abomination before God*.†

Philothea, be impartial and just in your actions; always put yourself in your neighbour's place, and put him in yours, and thus you will judge well; make yourself a seller when you are buying, and a buyer when you are selling, and then you will sell and buy justly. All these acts of injustice are small, because they do not oblige us to restitution, inasmuch as we do not exceed our strict rights in what is favourable to us; but, for all that, they oblige us to correct ourselves of them, for they are great defects of reason and of charity; and, after all, we are only deceiving ourselves, for we lose nothing by living generously, nobly and courteously, and with a heart that is royal, impartial and reasonable. Remember, then, my Philothea, often to examine your heart, if it be such in regard to your neighbour as you would have his be in regard to you, if you were in his place; for that is the mark of true reason. Trajan, when blamed by his intimates for making, as they thought, the imperial majesty too accessible, answered:

\* Ps. xi 3.

† Prov. xx 23.



Ought I not as emperor to behave towards private persons as I would have an emperor behave towards me if I were a private person myself ?

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### OF DESIRES

EVERYONE knows that we must refrain from desiring evil things, for the desire of evil makes us evil. But I say yet more to you, my Philothea: do not desire things that are dangerous to the soul, such as dances, games and other such pastimes; nor honours and offices, nor visions and ecstasies, for there is much danger, vanity and deceit in all such things. Do not desire things which are far distant, that is to say, which cannot happen for a long time, as many do, who thereby weary and distract their hearts to no purpose, and put themselves in danger of much disquietude. If a young man desires earnestly to be provided with some office before the time is come, of what use, I pray, is this desire? If a married woman desires to be a nun, to what purpose is it? If I desire to buy something that belongs to my neighbour before he is ready to sell it, do I not lose my time in this desire? If, when I am sick, I desire to preach or to say Mass, to visit other sick persons and to do the work of them that are in health, are not these desires vain, since at such a time it is not in my power to give effect to them? And yet these useless desires occupy the place of others which I ought to have; to be very patient, very resigned, very mortified, very obedient and very patient in my sufferings, which is what God wishes me to practise at such a time. But generally we conceive the desires of women that are with child, who wish for fresh cherries in the autumn, and fresh grapes in the spring.

I do not approve at all of a person, who is occupied

in some duty or calling, wasting time in desiring some other kind of life than that which is suited to his duty, or practices incompatible with his present condition of life; for this fritters away the energies of the heart and makes it weak in carrying out necessary exercises. If I desire the solitude of the Carthusians I waste my time, and this desire takes the place of the desire which I ought to have to employ myself well in my present office. No, I would not even wish anyone to desire to have greater talent or a better judgement, for these desires are vain and take the place of the desire which each one should have to cultivate his own talent, such as it is; nor would I have anyone desire means of serving God which he has not, but I would have him make a good use of those which he has. Now this applies to those desires that occupy the heart; for as to simple wishes, they do no harm at all, provided that they be not frequent.

Do not desire crosses, save in proportion to the measure wherewith you have borne those that have been already sent to you; for it is an illusion to desire martyrdom, and not to have the courage to bear an injury. The enemy often suggests to us ardent desires for things that are absent and that will never come to pass, in order to divert our minds from objects that are present, and from which, however little they may be, we might derive great profit. We fight the monsters of Africa in imagination, and from lack of attention we allow ourselves in reality to be killed by the little serpents that lie in our way. Do not desire temptations, for that would be rashness; but occupy your heart in awaiting them courageously, and in defending yourself from them when they come.

A variety of dishes (especially if the quantity be great) always burdens the stomach, and if it be weak, causes injury to it: do not fill your soul with many desires, neither worldly ones, for they would ruin

it altogether; nor even spiritual ones, for they would be a burden to you. When your soul is purged, feeling herself freed from evil humours, she has a great appetite for spiritual things; and, like a famished person, she begins to desire a thousand kinds of exercises of piety, of mortification, of repentance, of humility, of charity, of prayer. It is a good sign, my Philothea, to have so good an appetite; but consider whether you can properly digest all that you wish to eat. Therefore among so many desires, choose, with the advice of your spiritual Father, those which can be practised and carried into effect in the present; turn these to good account; when you have done that, God will send you others, which also you will practise in their own good time, and so you will not lose your time in unprofitable desires. I do not say that we should ever lose good desires of any kind, but I say that we must give effect to them in order; and those which cannot be carried into effect in the present, must be locked away in some corner of our hearts, and in the meanwhile those should be carried into effect which are ripe and in season. Now this applies not only to spiritual things, but also to things of the world; without this we can only live with disquietude and eager anxiety.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### COUNSELS FOR MARRIED PERSONS

MARRIAGE is a great Sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church;\* it is honourable in all† persons, and in every way—that is to say, in all its parts; to all persons, for even virgins should honour it with humility; in all persons, for it is equally holy in the poor and in the rich; in every way, for its origin, its end, its uses, its form and its matter are holy. It is the nursery of Christianity, which fills the earth with

\* Eph. v 32.

† Heb. xiii 4.

true believers, to fill up the number of the elect in Heaven; so that the preservation of the well-being of marriage is extremely important to the commonwealth, for marriage is its root and the source of all its streams.

Would to God that his well-beloved Son were invited to all marriages, as he was to that of Cana. The wine of consolations and blessings would then never be wanting, for, if there be ordinarily but little of such wine, and that only in the beginning, it is because Adonis is invited there in place of our Lord, and Venus in place of our Lady. He that would have fair and speckled lambs, like Jacob, must, like him, present beautiful rods of divers colours to the sheep when they come together to mate; and they that wish for a happy issue to marriage should, at their weddings, represent to themselves the holiness and dignity of this Sacrament; but instead of that, there are a thousand disorders in entertainments, feasts and words; it is not, therefore, surprising if the results of such marriages be disorderly.

Especially do I exhort married persons to that mutual love which is so much recommended to them by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. O you that are married, it is nothing to say: Love one another with a mutual love, for pairs of turtle-doves do that; nor to say: Love one another with a human love, for pagans have done that well enough; but I say to you, with the great Apostle:\* *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church*; wives, love your husbands as the Church loves her Saviour. It was God who brought Eve to our first father, Adam, and gave her to him for his wife: it is also God, my friends, who with his invisible hand has tied the knot of the sacred bond of your marriage, and who has given you one to the other; why do you not love one another with a love that is altogether holy, sacred and divine?

\* Eph. v 25.

The first effect of this love is the indissoluble union of your hearts. If we glue together two pieces of fir, provided that the glue be good, the union of the two pieces will be so strong that it would be much easier to break the pieces in other parts than in the part where they were joined together; but God joins the husband to the wife with his own blood: and therefore this union is so strong that the soul ought rather to be separated from the body of the one and of the other, than the husband from the wife. Now this is not to be understood so much of the body as of the heart, of the affection and of the love.

The second effect of this love should be the inviolable fidelity of the one to the other. Of old, seals were engraved upon rings which were worn on the fingers, as Scripture itself testifies; this, then, is the explanation of the marriage ceremony: the Church, by the hand of the priest, blesses a ring, and by giving it first to the man testifies that she closes up and puts a seal upon his heart by this Sacrament, so that neither the name nor the love of any other woman may ever enter into it, so long as she lives, who has been given to him in marriage; then the bridegroom puts the ring upon the finger of the bride, that she likewise may know that her heart must never entertain any affection for another man so long as he lives upon the earth, whom our Lord has just given to her.

The third fruit of marriage is the procreation and rightful upbringing of children. It is a great honour to you, O married, that God, wishing to multiply souls who may bless and praise him for all eternity, makes you co-operators with himself in so worthy a work, by the procreation of the bodies, into which he infuses the souls, like drops from heaven, creating them, as he does, when he infuses them into the bodies.

Preserve, then, O husbands, a tender, constant and



cordial love towards your wives; for the woman was drawn from that side of the first man which was nearest to his heart, to the end that she might be loved by him cordially and tenderly. The weaknesses and infirmities, whether bodily or spiritual, of your wives, ought not to provoke you to any sort of disdain, but rather to a sweet and loving compassion, for God has created them such, so that, since they are dependent upon you, you may receive more honour and respect thereby, and may have them as companions in such sort that you may be nevertheless their heads and superiors in authority. And you, O wives, love tenderly and affectionately, but with a love that is full of esteem and reverence, the husbands whom God has given you; for truly God created them of a more vigorous and predominant sex, and willed that the woman should depend upon the man, *bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh*,\* and that she should be fashioned from one of his ribs, drawn from under his arms, to show that she must be under the hand and guidance of the husband; and all Holy Scripture enjoins on you this subjection, which nevertheless the same Scripture renders easy to you, not only wishing you to submit to it with love, but ordering your husbands to exercise their authority with great love, tenderness and sweetness: *Husbands*, says St Peter, treat your wives with consideration, *giving honour to them as to the weaker vessel*.†

But while I exhort you to foster more and more this mutual love which you owe one to another, take care that it be not changed into any sort of jealousy; for it often happens that, as worms breed in the ripest and most delicate fruit, so jealousy is born in the warmest and most devoted love of married persons, the substance of which, however, it spoils and corrupts, for little by little it begets disputes, dissensions and separations. Of a truth,

\* Gen. ii 23.

† 1 Eph. iii 7.

jealousy never appears, where the friendship is mutually founded upon true virtue; and therefore it is an indubitable mark of a love that is in some sort sensual and gross, and which is set up in a heart wherein it has found a virtue that is imperfect, inconstant and prone to suspicion. It is therefore an empty vaunt of friendship to wish to exalt it by jealousy, for jealousy is in truth a mark of the size and grossness of a friendship, but not of its goodness, purity and perfection; since the perfection of friendship presupposes that we are certain of the virtue of the person whom we love, whereas jealousy presupposes that we are uncertain.

O husbands, if you wish your wives to be faithful, give them a lesson by your example. "What claim have you," says St Gregory Nazianzen, "to exact chastity from your wives if you yourselves live unchastely? How can you demand of them what you do not give them?" Do you wish them to be chaste? Be chaste yourselves, and, as St Paul\* says, *let everyone know how to possess his vessel in sanctification*. But if, on the contrary, you yourselves teach them to be unfaithful, it is not surprising that you should be dishonoured by their infidelity. And you, O wives, whose honour is inseparably bound up with chastity and modesty, guard your glory jealously, and suffer no kind of wantonness to tarnish the spotlessness of your reputation. Fear attacks of any kind, however small they may be; never allow anyone to trifle with you. Whosoever praises your beauty and your charm should be held in suspicion by you; for whosoever praises wares which he cannot buy, is ordinarily much tempted to steal them. But if to praise of yourself anyone add dispraise of your husband, he insults you grossly; for it is clear that he not only wishes to ruin you, but already considers you half ruined, since a bargain is half concluded with the second merchant when

\* 1 Thess. iv 4.

one is dissatisfied with the first. Ladies, both in ancient and modern times, have been accustomed to wear many pearls in their ears, for the pleasure, according to Pliny, of hearing the little sounds which they make when they touch one another. But for my part, knowing that the great friend of God, Isaac, sent ear-rings to the chaste Rebecca as the first pledges of his love, I think that this mystical ornament signifies that the first thing which a husband should possess in a wife, and which the wife ought faithfully to keep for him, is her ear, so that no speech nor sound may enter it but the sweet and pleasant sound of chaste and modest words, which are the orient pearls of the Gospel; for we must ever remember that poison enters souls through the ear, just as it enters bodies through the mouth.

Love and fidelity, when united, always beget intimacy and confidence; and therefore holy men and women have made much use of mutual caresses in marriage—caresses that are truly loving, but chaste; tender, but sincere. So Isaac and Rebecca, the most chaste married couple of ancient times, were seen through a window caressing one another in such a way that, although there was nothing immodest in it, Abimelech knew well that they could not be other than husband and wife. The great St Louis, who was as rigorous towards his own flesh as he was tender in his love of his wife, was almost blamed for being lavish in such caresses, although in truth he rather deserved praise for knowing how to lay aside his martial and courageous spirit, and give these little demonstrations of affection; for although these little demonstrations of pure and frank affection do not bind hearts together, yet they bring them close together, and serve as a pleasant aid to mutual intercourse.

St Monica, when pregnant with the great St Augustine, dedicated him often to the Christian religion and to the service of God's glory, as he himself

testifies, saying that he had already tasted "the salt of God in the womb of his mother." This is a great example for Christian wives to offer to God the fruit of their wombs, even before it is born; for God who accepts the offerings of a humble and willing heart, usually furthers the good desires of mothers at such a time: witness Samuel, St Thomas Aquinas, St Andrew of Fiesole and many others. The mother of St Bernard, worthy mother of such a son, used to take her children in her arms as soon as they were born and offer them to God, and thereafter she loved them reverently, as holy things entrusted to her by God; which turned out so happily that in the end all seven became very holy.

But when children come into the world and begin to have the use of reason, fathers and mothers should be very careful to instil into their hearts the fear of God. The good Queen Blanche was most careful to do this in the case of her son, the King St Louis, for she used oftentimes to say to him: "My dear child, I would much rather see you die before my eyes than see you commit one single mortal sin"; which remained so engraven in the soul of this holy son that, as he himself used to relate, never a day of his life passed in which he did not remember it, endeavouring, as much as he was able, to carry out faithfully this divine teaching. Indeed, races and generations are called, in our speech, houses, and the Hebrews even call the begetting of children the building-up of a house: for it is in this sense that it is said that God *built houses*\* for the midwives of Egypt. Now this is to show that, to build a good house, is not to fill it with many worldly possessions, but to bring up the children well in the fear of God and in virtue; wherein no pains nor labour should be spared, because children are the *crown*† of the father and mother.

Thus did St Monica combat the evil inclinations of

\* Exod. i 21.

† Prov. xvii 6.

St Augustine with so much fervour and constancy that, having followed him by sea and by land, she made him more happily the child of her tears by the conversion of his soul, than he had been the child of her blood by the generation of his body.

St Paul allots to wives *the care of the house*;<sup>\*</sup> and therefore many hold this well-grounded opinion that their devotion is more profitable to the family than that of their husbands, who, not coming so much into contact with the members of the household, cannot in consequence so readily influence them to the practice of virtue. For this reason, Solomon, in his Proverbs, makes the happiness of the whole house depend upon the care and industry of the *strong woman*† whom he describes.

It is said in Genesis‡ that Isaac, *seeing his wife Rebecca barren, besought the Lord for her*, or, according to the Hebrew, *besought the Lord opposite to her*, because the one prayed on one side of the oratory, and the other on the other; and so the prayer of the husband made in this manner was heard. The closest and most fruitful union between husband and wife is that which is effected in holy devotion, to which they ought to encourage one another in a spirit of emulation. There are certain fruits, like the quince, which, by reason of the tartness of their juice, are scarcely palatable except in the form of preserve; there are others, which, by reason of their tenderness and delicacy, will not keep, unless they be preserved in like manner, such as cherries and apricots. So wives ought to wish their husbands to be steeped in the sugar of devotion, for a man without devotion is a severe, harsh and rough creature; and husbands ought to wish their wives to be devout, for without devotion, a woman is very frail, and disposed to waver or become tarnished in virtue. St Paul has said that *the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the believing*

\* Tit. ii 5.

† Chap. xxxi.

‡ Chap. xxv 21.



*husband*,\* because in this strait bond of marriage, the one may easily draw the other to virtue. But what a great blessing it is when a believing husband and a believing wife sanctify one another in the true fear of the Lord.

For the rest, the mutual support of one another ought to be so great, that both should never be angry together and at the same time, so that there may never be dissension and strife between them. The honey-bees cannot stay in a place where there are echoes and resoundings and reverberations of voices; nor, indeed, can the Holy Spirit abide in a house wherein are strife, and the resoundings and reverberations of wrangling and altercation.

St Gregory Nazianzen testifies that in his time married persons used to keep the anniversary of their marriage as a festival day. I should certainly approve if this custom were introduced now, provided that such a festival day be not kept by indulging in worldly and sensual recreations, but that husbands and wives, having confessed and communicated on that day, recommend to God more fervently than usual the course of their marriage, renewing their good resolutions to sanctify it more and more by mutual love and fidelity, and refreshing themselves in our Lord for the support of the burdens of their state of life.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### OF THE HONOURABLENESS OF THE MARRIAGE BED

*THE marriage bed* must be *undefiled*,† as the Apostle says—that is to say, exempt from immodesty and other defilements. Thus was marriage first instituted in the earthly paradise where, until the time of the fall, there was no disorder of concupiscence in it, nor anything dishonourable.

\* 1 Cor. vii 14.

† Heb. xiii 4.

There is a certain resemblance between the pleasures of the flesh and those of eating, for both of them relate to the flesh, although the former, by reason of their brutish vehemence, are alone called carnal. I will therefore explain what I cannot say of the former by what I shall say of the latter.

1. Eating is ordained for the preservation of life: now, just as eating merely to nourish and preserve life is a thing that is good, holy and commanded, so what is requisite in marriage for the procreation of children and the multiplication of persons is a thing that is good and very holy, for it is the principal end of marriage.

2. To eat, not for the preservation of life, but in order to preserve that mutual intercourse and condescension which we owe one to another, is a very just and right thing: and in the same way, the mutual and legitimate satisfaction of husband and wife is called by St Paul, a *debt*,\* but a debt so binding that he will not allow one of the parties to abstain from rendering it without the free and voluntary consent of the other, not even for the sake of exercises of devotion,† which led me to say the word which I said on this subject in the chapter on Holy Communion; how much less, then, may either party excuse himself from rendering the debt to the other from fanciful pretensions to virtue, or from anger and scorn!

3. As those who eat from the duty of mutual intercourse should eat freely and not as it were by constraint, and, moreover, should try to show some appetite, so the marriage debt should always be rendered faithfully, freely, and just as if it were with the hope of begetting children, even though for some reason there may be no such hope.

4. To eat, not for the two former reasons, but merely to satisfy the appetite, is permissible, but not praiseworthy; for the mere pleasure of the sensual

\* 1 Cor. vii 3.

† 1 Cor. vii 5.

appetite cannot be an end sufficient in itself to make an action praiseworthy; it is enough if it is permissible.

5. To eat, not from mere appetite, but to excess and immoderately, is more or less blameworthy, according as the excess is great or small.

6. Now excess in eating consists not only in eating too much, but also in the way and manner of eating. It is a remarkable thing, dear Philothea, that honey, which is so proper and wholesome a food for bees, may nevertheless be so harmful to them that sometimes it makes them ill, as when they eat too much of it in springtime; for it gives them the flux, and sometimes causes them to die irremediably, as when they become covered with honey all over the head and forepart of their body.

Of a truth, nuptial intercourse which is so holy, so just, so commendable, so useful to the commonwealth, is nevertheless in some cases dangerous to those who make use of it: for sometimes it makes their souls very sick with venial sin, as happens by simple excess; and sometimes it causes them to die of mortal sin, as happens when the order established for the procreation of children is violated and perverted; in which case, such sins are always mortal, and they are more or less detestable, according as one departs more or less from this order. For inasmuch as the procreation of children is the first and principal end of marriage, it is never lawful to depart from the order established for this purpose, though for some accidental cause conception may not be possible, as happens when barrenness or pregnancy prevents procreation and generation; for in such cases the bodily intercourse does not cease to be capable of being just and holy, provided that the laws of generation be preserved, for no circumstances ever make it lawful to transgress the law which the principal end of marriage has imposed. Of a truth, the shameful and execrable act committed

by Onan in his marriage was detestable in the sight of God, as the holy text says in the thirty-eighth chapter of Genesis; and although certain heretics of our age, a hundred times more to be blamed than the Cynics, of whom St Jerome speaks when commenting on the Epistle to the Ephesians, have tried to prove that it was the perverse intention of this wicked man which displeased God, the Scripture nevertheless speaks quite otherwise, and asserts emphatically that the *thing* itself which he did was *detestable* and abominable in the sight of God.

7. It is a true mark of a beggarly, mean, abject and base spirit to think of the dishes and of eating before the time of the repast, and more so still, when afterwards one is taken up with the pleasure which one has had in the meal, dwelling upon it in words and thoughts, and allowing one's mind to wallow in the remembrance of the pleasure enjoyed in swallowing down the mouthfuls; as do those who before dinner have their mind fastened on the spit, and after dinner on the dishes; persons fit to be scullions, who, as St Paul says,\* make a *god* of their *belly*. Persons of honour do not think of the table until they sit down to it, and afterwards they wash their hands and mouth, in order to lose both the taste and the smell of what they have eaten. The elephant is only a huge animal, but he is the most worthy beast that lives on the earth, and the most intelligent. I will give you an instance of his excellence; he never changes his mate and tenderly loves the one of his choice, with whom nevertheless he mates but every third year, and then for five days only and so secretly that he has never been seen to do so; but he is seen again on the sixth day, on which, before doing anything else, he goes straight to some river, wherein he bathes his whole body, for he has no wish to return

\* Phil. iii 19.

to the herd until he has purified himself. Are not these excellent and modest traits in such a beast, by which he invites married persons not to allow their affections to remain attached to the pleasures of sense which they have experienced in accordance with their state of life, but, when these are past, to wash their heart and affection of them, and to purify themselves of them as soon as possible, that afterwards they may perform other actions which are more spiritual and lofty?

In this counsel consists the perfect practice of the excellent doctrine which St Paul gives to the Corinthians: \* *The time is short; it remaineth that they who have wives be as if they had none.* For, according to St Gregory, he *has a wife as if he had none*, who takes bodily consolations with her in such a way that he is not thereby diverted from spiritual aims; and, what is said of the husband is understood reciprocally of the wife. *Let those that use this world be as if they used it not*, says the same Apostle. † Let all, then, use the world, each one according to his calling, but in such a way that, by not setting his affection upon it, he may be as free and ready to serve God as if he made no use of it at all. "It is man's great ill," says St Augustine, "to wish to enjoy those things which he should only use, and to wish to use those things which he should only enjoy." We must enjoy spiritual things, and only use corporal things, for when our use of the latter is changed into mere enjoyment, our rational soul is also changed into one that is brutish and bestial.

I think I have said all that I wished to say, and have made clear, without saying it, that which I did not wish to say.

\* 1 Cor. vii 29.

† 1 Cor. vii 31.



## CHAPTER XL

## COUNSELS FOR WIDOWS

ST PAUL instructs all prelates, in the person of his Timothy, saying: *Honour widows that are widows indeed.*\* Now, to be a widow indeed, the following things are requisite:

1. That the widow should be a widow not only in body but also in heart—that is to say, that she should be resolved, with an inviolable resolution, to keep herself in the state of a chaste widowhood; for widows who are only such while awaiting an opportunity of remarriage, are only separated from men according to the pleasures of the body, but they are already joined to them according to the desire of the heart. But if the true widow, to establish herself in the state of widowhood, wishes to offer her body and her chastity to God by vow, she will add a great ornament to her widowhood, and will make her resolution very secure; for seeing that after the vow it is no longer in her power to give up her chastity without giving up Paradise, she will be so jealous of her design, that she will never suffer even the least thought of marriage to stay in her heart for one single moment; so that this sacred vow will erect a strong barrier between her soul and every kind of project contrary to her resolution.

Indeed, St Augustine strongly urges the Christian widow to take this vow; and the ancient and learned Origen proceeds much farther, for he counsels married women to vow and dedicate themselves to a chaste widowhood, in case their husbands die before them, so that amid the pleasures of sense which they may enjoy in marriage, they may nevertheless enjoy the merit of a chaste widowhood by means of this anticipated promise. A vow renders works done in consequence thereof more pleasing to

\* 1 Tim. v 3.

God, gives greater courage to carry them out, and gives to God not only the works, which are, as it were, the fruits of our goodwill, but consecrates to him also our will itself, which is, as it were, the tree of our actions. By simple chastity we lend our body to God, retaining, however, the liberty of allowing it to enjoy lawful pleasures of the flesh at some other time; but by the vow of chastity we make him an absolute and irrevocable gift of our body, without reserving to ourselves any power to revoke it, thereby happily making ourselves slaves of him, whose bond-service is better than any kingship. Now, as I approve very much of the counsel of these two great persons, I would like those souls, that are so happy as to desire to put them into practice, to do so prudently, holily and firmly, after having carefully examined their courage, invoked the aid of heavenly inspiration, and taken counsel of some wise and devout director, for by this means all will be done more profitably.

2. Moreover, this renunciation of remarriage must be made purely and simply for the sake of directing all the affections towards God with greater purity, and of uniting the heart entirely with that of his divine Majesty; for if the desire of leaving her children rich, or some other kind of worldly aspiration serve to keep a widow in her state of widowhood, she will perhaps have *whereof to glory, but certainly not before God*,\* because nothing is truly praiseworthy in God's sight but that which is done for him.

3. Further, a widow, to be *a widow indeed*, must be separated from and voluntarily deprived of worldly satisfactions. *The widow that liveth in pleasures*, says St Paul,† *is dead* while she is living. She that would be a widow and yet takes pleasure in being courted, made much of, flattered; that desires to go to balls, to dances and to feasts; that likes to be perfumed, decked and adorned, is a widow who is

\* Rom. iv 2.

† 1 Tim. v 6.

living as to the body but dead as to the soul. What matters it, I ask you, whether the sign of the inn of Adonis and of worldly love be made of white feathers set together in the form of a plume, or of a piece of crape spread like a net about the face? Indeed, black is often put over white for vanity's sake, in order to set it off the better. The widow having already had experience of the fashion where-with women are able to please men, casts more dangerous baits within their hearts. The widow, then, *that liveth in these foolish pleasures, is dead while she is living*, and, properly speaking, is but an image of widowhood.

*The time of pruning is come: the voice of the turtle is heard in our land*, says the Cantic of Canticles.\* Whosoever would live devoutly must cut off worldly superfluities; but this is especially necessary for the true widow, who, like a chaste turtle-dove, has quite recently been mourning, bewailing and lamenting the loss of her husband. When Noemi returned from Moab to Bethlehem, the women of the town, who had known her when she was first married, said one to another: *Is not this Noemi? But she replied: Call me not Noemi, I beseech you—for Noemi means comely and beautiful—but call me Mara, for the Lord hath filled my soul with bitterness*:† which she said because her husband was dead. Even so the devout widow never wishes to be called and esteemed either beautiful or comely, being content to be what God wills her to be—that is to say, humble and holy in his sight.

Lamps, the oil of which is aromatic, give forth a sweeter fragrance when their lights are extinguished; even so the widow, whose love during marriage has been pure, gives forth a sweeter perfume of the virtue of chastity, when her light—that is to say, her husband—is extinguished by death. To

\* Chap. ii 12.

† Ruth i 19, 20.

love the husband while he is living is a common thing amongst women; but to love him so much, that after his death she wishes for no other, is a degree of love which belongs only to them that are widows indeed. To hope in God while the husband serves as a support is not an uncommon thing; but to hope in God when deprived of this support, is a very praiseworthy thing: wherefore the perfection of a person's virtue is more easily recognised in widowhood than in marriage.

The widow who has children that need her care and guidance, and especially in what concerns their souls and the settlement of their lives, cannot leave them, and ought not by any means to do so; for the Apostle St Paul says clearly that they are bound to fulfil such a charge, in order to *make a return of duty to their own fathers and mothers*, and so much the more because, *if anyone have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he is worse than an infidel*.<sup>\*</sup> But if the children be no longer in need of a mother's care, the widow should then gather together all her affections and thoughts, to apply them more purely to her own advancement in the love of God.

Unless some unavoidable necessity oblige her in conscience to become involved in public proceedings such as lawsuits, I counsel the true widow to abstain from them altogether, and to adopt that way of conducting her affairs which is most peaceable and tranquil, even though it seem not to be the most profitable. For the fruits derived from such labours and anxieties must needs be very great, to bear any comparison with the good of a holy tranquillity; quite apart from the fact that lawsuits and such disagreements distract the heart and oftentimes open the door to the enemies of chastity, because, while such things are in progress, to please those whose

\* 1 Tim. v 8.

favour they need, persons behave themselves in a manner that is neither devout nor pleasing to God.

Let prayer be the continual exercise of the widow; for since she should now have no love but for God, she should in like manner have scarcely any words but for God. And as the iron, which, when prevented from following the attraction of the magnet by reason of the presence of the diamond, springs towards it as soon as the diamond is removed, so the heart of the widow, which could not very well give itself entirely to God, nor follow the attraction of his divine love during the life of her husband, should as soon as her husband is dead, *run ardently after the odour of the heavenly perfumes*,\* as though saying in imitation of the sacred Spouse: O Lord, now that I am all my own, allow me to be all thine; *draw me: we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments*.

The virtues proper to a holy widow are perfect modesty, the renouncement of honours, of rank, of assemblies, of titles and of such vanities; the service of the poor and of the sick, the consolation of the afflicted, and the instruction of girls in the devout life; and she must strive to make herself a perfect example of all virtues to young women. Neatness and simplicity are the two ornaments of her attire; humility and charity the two ornaments of her actions; sincerity and mildness the two ornaments of her speech; modesty the ornament of her eyes; and Jesus Christ crucified the sole love of her heart.

In brief, the true widow in the Church is a little March violet, who sheds around her an incomparable sweetness by the fragrance of her devotion, and almost always keeps herself hidden under the broad leaves of her humility, and testifies to her mortifica-

\* Cant. i 3.



tion by her sober colours; she appears in fresh and uncultivated spots, not wishing to be importuned with the society of worldlings, in order the better to preserve the freshness of her heart against all the heats with which the desire of goods, of honours, or even of love might inflame it. *Blessed shall she be*, says the Apostle,\* *if she so remain.*

I could say many more things upon this subject, but I shall have said everything when I say that the widow, who is jealous of the honour of her state, should read attentively the beautiful letters which the great St Jerome wrote to Furia and to Salvia, and to all those other ladies, who were so happy as to be the spiritual children of so great a Father, for nothing can be added to what he says to them but this counsel: that the true widow should never blame nor censure those who marry a second time, or even a third or fourth time, for in some cases God arranges matters in this way for his greater glory. And she should ever bear in mind this teaching of the ancients, that neither widowhood nor virginity has any rank in heaven save that which is assigned to each by humility.

## CHAPTER XLI

### A WORD TO VIRGINS

O VIRGINS, if you aspire to a temporal marriage, jealously keep your first love for your first husband. I deem it a great deception to offer him, instead of a heart that is whole and sincere, a heart that is altogether weakened, impaired and worn out with love. But should your good fortune invite you to the chaste and virginal nuptials of a spiritual marriage, and should you wish to preserve your virginity for ever, O God, keep your love as inviolate as you can for this divine Spouse, who, being purity itself,

\* 1 Cor. vii 40.

loves nothing so much as purity, and to whom the firstfruits of all things are due, but principally those of love. The epistles of St Jerome will give you all the counsels that you need; and since your condition of life obliges you to obedience, choose a guide under whose direction you may the more holily dedicate your heart and your body to his divine Majesty.

FOURTH PART OF THE  
INTRODUCTION

CONTAINING COUNSELS FOR COM-  
BATING THE MORE ORDINARY  
TEMPTATIONS





## CHAPTER I

THAT WE MUST PAY NO HEED TO WHAT  
THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD SAY

**A**S soon as worldlings perceive that you wish to follow the devout life, they will let fly at you a thousand shafts of their gossip and slander: the more malicious will falsely attribute your change to hypocrisy, bigotry and pretence; they will say that the world has frowned upon you, and that for this reason you turn to God; your friends will hasten to pour out upon you a flood of remonstrances, which in their opinion are very prudent and charitable; you will fall, they will tell you, into a state of melancholy, you will lose credit with the world, you will make yourself unbearable, you will grow old before your time, your domestic affairs will suffer thereby; when one is in the world one must live the life of a person in the world; salvation may be attained without so many mysteries; and a thousand such-like foolish things.

My Philothea, all this is but foolish and vain babble; such persons have no care for your health or for your affairs. *If you were of the world, says the Saviour,\* the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* We have seen gentlemen and ladies spend the whole night, and even many nights consecutively, in playing at chess and at cards. Can there be any attention more dull, more melancholy and more dismal than that? And yet worldlings say not a word, friends are not in the least disturbed thereat; but if we make an hour's meditation, or if we are seen

\* John xv 19.



to rise a little earlier than usual in the morning, in order to prepare for Communion, everyone runs off to the doctor that he may cure us of melancholy and jaundice. People spend thirty nights in dancing, and not one of them complains of any ill effects; but if they spend one Christmas night in watching, everyone coughs and complains of being ill next day. Who cannot see that the world is an unjust judge; gracious and favourable towards its own children, but harsh and rigorous towards the children of God?

We cannot stand well with the world unless we become one with it. It is impossible for us to satisfy it, for it is too capricious: *John came*, says the Saviour,\* *neither eating nor drinking, and you say that he hath a devil; the Son of man came eating and drinking and you say that he is a Samaritan.* It is true, Philothea; if from a spirit of condescension we allow ourselves to laugh, play, dance with the world, it will be scandalized; if we do not do so, it will accuse us of hypocrisy or melancholy; if we dress well, it will attribute some wrong motive to us; if we dress plainly, it will attribute it to meanness of heart; our mirth will be called dissipation by the world, and our mortification sadness; and since it ever looks upon us with a jaundiced eye, we can never satisfy it. It exaggerates our imperfections, and says that they are sins; it makes out that our venial sins are mortal, and changes our sins of frailty into sins of malice. And whereas *charity*, as St Paul says,† *is kind*, the world, on the contrary, is spiteful; whereas *charity thinketh no evil*, the world, on the contrary, always thinks evil, and when it cannot find fault with our actions, it finds fault with our intentions. Whether the sheep have horns or not, whether they be black or white, the wolf will not fail to devour them if he can.

Whatever we may do, the world will ever wage war against us: if we are a long time in the con-

\* Matt. xi 18, 19.

† 1 Cor. xiii 4, 5.

fessional, it will express astonishment that we have so much to say; if we are there but a short time, it will say that we have not confessed everything. It will watch our behaviour, and, if we utter one little word of anger, it will declare that we are insupportable; our care in managing our affairs will be regarded as avarice, and our gentleness as foolishness; but as for the children of the world, their anger is generosity, their avarice is economy, their familiarities are honourable conversations; spiders always spoil the work of the bees.

Let us pay no attention to this blind world, Philothea: let it cry out as much as it will, like an owl, to disturb the birds of the day. Let us be firm in our designs, unswerving in our resolutions; perseverance will make it clear whether it be in good earnest that we have sacrificed ourselves to God, and undertaken the devout life. Comets shine with a brightness that is almost equal to that of planets; but comets disappear in a very short time, since they are only transitory fires, whereas planets have a lasting brightness: even so hypocrisy and true virtue are very like one another externally; but they may easily be distinguished from one another, because hypocrisy does not last long, and vanishes like rising smoke, but true virtue is always firm and constant. It is no small help to the consolidation of our devotion in the beginning, if we meet with blame and with calumny on this account; for by this means we avoid the danger of vanity and pride, which are like the midwives of Egypt, to whom Pharaoh gave orders that they should kill all the male children of Israel on the very day of their birth. We are *crucified to the world*, and *the world* ought to be *crucified\* to us*; it holds us to be fools, let us hold it to be mad.

\* Gal. vi 14.

## CHAPTER II

## THAT WE MUST HAVE GREAT COURAGE

LIGHT, though beautiful and pleasant to our eyes, dazzles them notwithstanding when they have been in darkness for a long time; and before we are grown familiar with the inhabitants of any country, however gracious and courteous they may be, we find ourselves somewhat ill at ease. It may very well happen, my dear Philothea, that upon this change of life there will be many revolts in your soul, and that this great and general farewell which you have said to the follies and vanities of the world will cause you some feelings of sadness and discouragement. If this should happen, have a little patience, I beseech you, for it is nothing: it is only a little discomfort which is caused by unfamiliarity; when this has worn off, you will receive ten thousand consolations. At first, perhaps, you will be sorry for having given up the empty glory which fools and flatterers gave you in your vanities; but, O God, would you lose the eternal glory which God will give you in truth? The vain amusements and diversions, in which you have spent your past years, will present themselves again to your heart, to entice it and draw it back to them; but have you the courage to renounce this happy eternity for the sake of such deceitful trifles? Believe me, if you persevere, you will soon receive consolations of the heart so delicious and agreeable, that you will confess that the world has nothing but gall in comparison with this honey, and that one single day of devotion is better than a thousand years of a worldly life.

But you perceive that the mountain of Christian perfection is exceeding high. Alas! my God, you say, how shall I be able to ascend it? Courage! Philothea, when the little bees begin to take shape they are called nymphs; and then, they are not as

yet able to fly to the flowers, nor to the mountains, nor to the neighbouring hills, in order to gather honey; but little by little, feeding on the honey which their mothers have prepared, these little nymphs grow wings and get strong, so that afterwards they fly all over the country in search of honey. It is true we are as yet but little bees in devotion: we cannot ascend according to our intention, which is nothing less than to reach the summit of Christian perfection; nevertheless we are beginning to take shape by means of our desires and resolutions; our wings are beginning to grow; and so we must have confidence that one day we shall be spiritual bees and able to fly; and in the meanwhile, let us live on the honey of the teachings which former devout persons have left us in such abundance, and let us ask God to give us *wings like a dove*, so that we may be able not only *to fly* during the time of this present life, but also *to rest*\* in the eternity of the future.

### CHAPTER III

OF THE NATURE OF TEMPTATIONS AND  
OF THE DIFFERENCE THAT THERE IS  
BETWEEN FEELING TEMPTATION AND  
CONSENTING TO IT

IMAGINE to yourself, Philothea, a young princess greatly beloved of her husband; and that some wicked man, in order to seduce her and defile her marriage bed, sends her some infamous messenger of love to treat with her about his wicked proposal. First, this messenger makes known to the princess the intention of his master; secondly, the princess either approves or disapproves of the proposal and the message; thirdly, she either consents or she refuses. Even so, Satan, the world and the flesh, seeing a soul espoused to the Son of God, send her

\* Ps. liv 7.

temptations and suggestions by which: (1) Sin is proposed to her; (2) she is pleased or displeased with the suggestion; (3) finally she consents or she refuses; which are, in short, the three steps of descent to iniquity: temptation, delectation and consent; and though these three actions are not so clearly discerned in all other kinds of sins, yet they are clearly seen in great and enormous sins.

Though the temptation, to any sin whatsoever, should last all our life, it cannot render us displeasing to the divine Majesty, provided that we do not take pleasure in it and that we do not consent to it; the reason is that in temptation we are not active but passive; and since we take no pleasure in it we cannot be in any way blamed for it. St Paul suffered for a long time temptations of the flesh, and so far was he from being displeasing to God on that account, that on the contrary God was glorified thereby; the blessed Angela of Foligno suffered such cruel temptations of the flesh that she moves us to compassion when she relates them; St Francis and St Benedict also suffered great temptations, when the one cast himself into the thorns and the other into the snow to moderate them; and nevertheless they lost nothing of the grace of God for all that, but gained a great increase of it thereby.

You must be very courageous, therefore, Philothea, in the midst of temptations, and never account yourself vanquished so long as they are displeasing to you; noting carefully this difference between feeling temptations and consenting to them, which is, that we may feel them even though they displease us, but we cannot consent to them unless we take pleasure in them, because pleasure ordinarily serves as a step towards consent. Therefore let the enemies of our salvation set before us, as much as they like, baits and enticements, let them wait always at the door of our heart to enter, let them make as many proposals to us as they like; but so long as we are resolved



to take no pleasure at all in all that, it is no more possible for God to be offended with us than for the prince, the husband of the princess of whom I have spoken, to be displeased with her on account of the message which was sent to her, if she has taken no sort of pleasure in it. There is, however, this difference between the soul and the princess in this matter: that the princess, when she has heard the dishonourable proposal, can, if she chooses, drive away the messenger and hear him no more; but it is not always in the power of the soul not to feel the temptation, although it is always in her power not to consent to it; and therefore, though the temptation may last and persevere a long time, it cannot do us any harm so long as it is displeasing to us.

But as for the delectation which may follow the temptation, inasmuch as we have two parts in our soul, the one inferior and the other superior, and since the inferior does not always follow the superior, but acts independently, it often happens that the inferior part takes pleasure in the temptation, without the consent—nay, against the will—of the superior; this is the conflict and the warfare which the Apostle St Paul describes, when he says that his *flesh lusteth against his spirit*,\* that there is a *law of the members* and a *law of the mind*,† and such-like things.

Have you ever seen, Philothea, a great brazier containing fire covered with ashes? When you come eight or ten hours later to look for fire there, you find only a very little in the centre of the brazier and that indeed with difficulty: yet there it is, since you are able to discover it, and with it you can rekindle all the other cinders that had gone out. It is the same with charity, which is our spiritual life, amid great and violent temptations: for temptation, casting its delectation into the inferior part, seems to cover the whole soul with ashes, and to reduce the love of God to very small dimensions, for it only appears

\* Gal. v 17.

† Rom. vii 23.

in the very centre of the heart, in the very lowest depth of the spirit; indeed it seems not to be even there, and it is difficult to discover it at all. Nevertheless it is truly there, since, though all may be troubled in our soul and in our body, yet we have the resolution not to consent to the sin or to the temptation, and the delectation which pleases the outer man displeases the inner, and though it be all about our will, yet it is not within it: and therefore we know that such delectation is involuntary, and being such cannot be sin.

## CHAPTER IV

### TWO GOOD EXAMPLES ON THIS SUBJECT

IT is so important for you to understand this thoroughly, that I make no excuse for enlarging upon the subject. Think of the young man, of whom St Jerome speaks, who, bound down most delicately upon a soft couch with silken scarves, was provoked by all sorts of lascivious touches and allurements by a shameless woman, who lay with him for the express purpose of shaking his constancy. Must not he have felt untoward movements of the flesh? Must not his senses have been possessed by the delectation, and his imagination filled with the presence of these voluptuous objects? Without doubt; and yet, in the midst of so many troubles, in the midst of such a terrible storm of temptations, and encompassed by such lascivious pleasures, he testifies that his heart is unconquered, and that his will yields no consent: for, seeing everything in revolt against him, and having no longer any part of the body subject to his control but the tongue, he bit it off with his teeth and spat it in the face of the wretched woman, who was tormenting his soul more cruelly by voluptuousness, than the executioners could have done by their torments; so the tyrant,

who despaired of conquering him by tortures, thought to overcome him by these pleasures.

The story of the conflict of St Catherine of Siena on a like occasion is altogether admirable: the substance of it is as follows: The wicked spirit had the permission of God to assail the chastity of this holy virgin with the greatest fury of which he was capable, provided that he did not touch her at all. He made therefore all kinds of unchaste suggestions to her heart; and in order to move her still more, coming with his companions in the form of men and women, he committed thousands of carnal and lascivious actions in her sight, uttering also most unchaste words and invitations; and though all these things were exterior, yet by means of the senses they penetrated deeply into the heart of the virgin, which, as she herself confessed, was filled with them, and her superior will alone remained unshaken by this tempest of obscenity and carnal delectation. And this lasted for a very long time, until one day our Lord appeared to her, and she said to him: "Where wert thou, my sweet Saviour, when my heart was filled with such darkness and filthiness?" And he answered: "I was within thy heart, my daughter." "And how," she replied, "couldst thou have been within my heart, within which were so many obscenities? Dost thou then abide in such unclean places?" And our Lord said to her: "Tell me, did these unclean thoughts of thy heart cause thee pleasure or sadness, bitterness or delectation?" And she said: "Extreme bitterness and sadness." And he answered her: "Who was it that put this great bitterness and sadness within thy heart, but myself, who remained hidden within the depth of thy soul? Believe me, my daughter, had I not been present, these thoughts, which surrounded thy will but were not able to take it by assault, would doubtless have prevailed against it, would have entered in, would have been received with pleasure by thy free choice,

and would thus have brought death to thy soul. But because I was within, I put this displeasure and this resistance in thy heart, by which it resisted the temptation with all its power; and not being able to resist as much as it would, it conceived a still greater displeasure and hatred against the temptation and against itself; and so these troubles were a source of great merit and of great profit to thee, and greatly increased thy virtue and thy strength."

Observe, Philothea, how this fire was covered with ashes, and that the temptation and delectation entered into the heart and encompassed the will, which alone, with the assistance of the Saviour, resisted by bitterness, displeasure and hatred the evil which was suggested to it, and continued steadfastly to refuse its consent to the sin which encompassed it. O God, what distress to a soul that loves God not to know whether God be within her or not, and whether the divine love, for which she fights, be altogether extinguished within her or not! But it is the choice flower of the perfection of heavenly love to make the lover suffer and fight for love's sake, without knowing whether he have the love for which and by which he fights.

## CHAPTER V

### ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE SOUL IN TEMPTATION

My Philothea, these great assaults and these strong temptations are only permitted by God against souls that he wishes to raise to his pure and excellent love; but it does not follow that afterwards they are certain of attaining thereto, for it has often happened that those who had been constant in such violent assaults were afterwards overcome in quite small temptations, because they did not correspond faithfully with divine grace. And I tell you this, to the end that,

should you ever chance to be afflicted with so great a temptation, you may know that God is granting you an extraordinary favour, by which he declares that he wishes to exalt you in his sight. Nevertheless, you must always be humble and fearful, not assuring yourself of being able to overcome small temptations because you have overcome big ones, except by a continual fidelity to his Majesty.

Therefore, whatever temptations may assail you, and whatever delectation may follow from them, so long as your will refuses its consent not only to the temptation, but also to the delectation, be not in the least disturbed, for God is not at all offended by it.

When a man is in a swoon, and no longer gives any sign of life, they lay a hand upon his heart, and if they feel the least movement there, they judge that he is still alive, and that by means of some cordial or restorative they may be able to make him regain strength and consciousness. So it sometimes happens that, owing to the violence of temptations, our soul seems to have lost all use of its powers, and, as though in a swoon, to have no longer any spiritual life or movement, but if we wish to know whether this be so, let us put our hand on our heart; let us consider if the heart and the will have still got any spiritual movement—that is to say, if they do their duty in refusing to consent and follow the temptation and delectation; for so long as the movement of refusal is within our heart we may rest assured that charity, which is the life of our souls, is in us, and that Jesus Christ our Saviour is within our soul, though hidden and concealed; so that, by means of the continual use of prayer, of the Sacraments and of confidence in God, we shall recover our strength and live a good and delectable life.



## CHAPTER VI

HOW TEMPTATION AND DELECTATION  
MAY BE SIN

THE princess of whom we have spoken is not responsible for the dishonourable proposal made to her, since, as we have presupposed, it was made to her against her will; but if, on the contrary, she had by her actions given some encouragement to the proposal, having wished to give love to him that courted her, doubtless she would be responsible for the proposal itself; and though she might draw back from it, yet she would deserve blame and punishment for it. So it sometimes happens that the temptation of itself may be a sin, because we are the cause of it. For example, I know that if I play, I give way readily to anger and blasphemy, and that such games are a temptation to me in this respect: I sin as often as I play, and am responsible for all the temptations which come to me when I play. In like manner, if I know that certain company is a source of temptation and of sin to me, and I go there of my own choice, I am certainly responsible for all the temptations that I receive there.

When the delectation which proceeds from the temptation can be avoided, it is always a sin to receive it, according as the pleasure which is taken in it and the consent which is given to it is great or little, of long duration or of short. It is always blameworthy in the young princess of whom we have spoken, if she not only listens to the impure and dishonourable proposal that is made to her, but also, after having listened to it, takes pleasure in it, allowing her heart to dwell upon it with contentment, for though she may not wish to consent to the actual carrying out of what is proposed to her, yet she consents to it in her heart by the contentment which she takes in it; and it is always wrong to apply either

the heart or the body to what is wrong; and, moreover, the wrongfulness consists so essentially in the application of the heart, that, without it, the application of the body cannot be a sin.

Therefore, when you are tempted to some sin, consider if you voluntarily gave occasion to the temptation, for then the temptation itself puts you in a state of sin, by reason of the risk to which you exposed yourself. And this is so, if you could easily have avoided the occasion, and if you foresaw or ought to have foreseen the coming of the temptation; but if you have given no occasion to the temptation, it can in no wise be imputed to you for sin.

When the delectation which follows the temptation might have been avoided, there is always some sort of sin, according as we have continued in it for a short or long time, and according to the cause of the pleasure which we have taken in it. A woman, who has given no encouragement to anyone to flirt with her, and yet takes pleasure in it, is not without blame, if there be no other reason for the pleasure which she takes in it than the love-making. For example, if the gallant who makes love to her plays beautifully upon the lute, and she takes pleasure, not in the love-making but in the harmony and sweetness of the sound of the lute, there is no sin; though she ought not to dwell for long upon this pleasure for fear of passing from this to delectation in the love-making. In like manner, if someone proposes to me a plan full of ingenuity and cunning for revenging myself upon my enemy, and I take no pleasure in the revenge which is proposed to me, and give no consent to it, but take pleasure only in the ingenuity of the proposal, I do not sin at all; although it is not a good thing to allow myself to dwell much upon this pleasure, for fear lest little by little I be led to take some pleasure in the revenge itself.

We are sometimes surprised by some feeling of delectation which immediately follows the temptation

before we are well aware of it; and this can only be at most a very light venial sin, which becomes greater if, after we are aware of the evil, we are negligent and spend some time in dallying with the delectation whether we shall accept it or refuse it; and greater still if, when we are aware of it, we dwell upon it for some time through downright negligence, without any sort of effort to reject it. But when we voluntarily and deliberately resolve to take pleasure in such delectations, it is a grave sin, if the object of the delectation be notably evil. It is very wrong for a woman to be willing to entertain a sinful love, even though she may have no intention of really yielding herself to the lover.

## CHAPTER VII

### REMEDIES AGAINST GREAT TEMPTATIONS

As soon as you find yourself in any temptations, do as little children do when they see a wolf or a bear in the country; for straightway they run to the arms of their father or of their mother, or at all events they call them to their help and assistance. Have recourse in like manner to God, imploring his mercy and his assistance: it is the remedy which our Lord teaches: *Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*\*

If you find that, notwithstanding, the temptation perseveres or grows stronger, run in spirit to embrace the holy Cross, as if you saw Jesus Christ crucified before you; protest that you will not consent to the temptation, and ask him for help against it, and so long as the temptation lasts, cease not to protest that you do not wish to consent to it.

But whilst you are making these protestations and these refusals to consent, do not look the temptation in the face, but look only at our Lord, for if you

\* Matt. xxvi 41.

look at the temptation, especially when it is strong, it might shake your courage.

Divert your mind from it by means of good and praiseworthy occupations; for these occupations, entering into your heart and taking possession of it, will drive away the evil temptations and suggestions.

The sovereign remedy against all temptations, great or small, is to open the heart, and to communicate the suggestions, feelings and affections which we have to our director; for note that the first condition that the evil one makes with a soul which he wishes to seduce is silence, as do those who wish to seduce women and girls, for the very first thing they do is to forbid them to communicate their proposals to their fathers or to their husbands; whilst, on the contrary, God, in his inspirations, requires above everything else that we should make them known to our superiors and directors.

But if, after all this, the temptation still continues obstinately to trouble and harass us, we have nothing to do but to be obstinate on our part in protesting that we do not wish to consent to it; for, as girls cannot be married so long as they say "no," so also the soul, though harassed, can never be injured so long as she says "no."

Do not dispute with your enemy, but give him no answer at all save that which our Lord gave him: \* *Begone, Satan, the Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and him only shalt thou serve.* And as a chaste wife should not answer one single word, nor look at the scoundrel who makes an unchaste proposal to her, but, leaving him at once, should at the same instant turn her heart towards her husband, and renew the promise of fidelity which she made to him, without wasting any time in words, so the devout soul, finding herself assailed by some temptation, should waste no time in disputing or replying, but should quite

\* Matt. iv 10.

simply turn towards Jesus Christ her Spouse and renew her protestation of fidelity, and of wishing to be for ever altogether his.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THAT WE MUST RESIST SMALL TEMPTATIONS

ALTHOUGH we must fight against great temptations with invincible courage, and although the victory which we gain over them is very profitable to us, yet perhaps we may be able to gain greater profit in fighting well against small temptations; for just as the great temptations surpass the small ones in quality, so the small ones surpass the great ones so much in number, that the victory over these may be comparable to that over the greater ones. Wolves and bears are certainly more dangerous than flies, but they do not cause us so much annoyance, nor do they exercise our patience so much. It is easy to refrain from murder, but it is difficult to avoid those little outbursts of anger, whereof the occasions present themselves every moment. It is easy for a man or a woman to refrain from adultery, but it is not so easy to refrain from amorous glances, from giving or receiving love, from seeking little favours, from saying and receiving words of flattery. It is easy to admit of no rival to the husband or to the wife, as far as the body is concerned, but it is not so easy to do the same in regard to the heart; very easy not to defile the marriage bed, but very difficult to refrain from everything that may be injurious to married love; easy not to steal the goods of others, but difficult to refrain from envy and covetousness; easy not to bear false witness in a court of law, but difficult never to lie in conversation; easy never to get drunk, but difficult always to be temperate; easy never to desire the death of another, but difficult



never to wish ill to him; easy never to defame him, but difficult never to despise him.

In a word, these little temptations to anger, suspicion, jealousy, envy, flirtation, frivolity, vanity, duplicity, affectation, artifice, impure thoughts, continually exercise those very persons who are most devout and resolute; and therefore, my dear Philothea, we must prepare ourselves for this combat with great care and diligence; and rest assured that for every victory which we gain over these little enemies, a precious stone will be set in the crown of glory which God is preparing for us in heaven. It is for this reason that I say, that whilst we must be ready to fight well and valiantly against great temptations, should they come, we must defend ourselves well and diligently against these little and weak assaults.

## CHAPTER IX

### OF REMEDIES AGAINST SMALL TEMPTATIONS

Now, as to these small temptations to vanity, suspicion, peevishness, jealousy, envy, flirtation, and such-like follies, which, like flies and midges, hover before our eyes, and sometimes sting us on the cheek, sometimes on the nose, because it is impossible to be altogether free from their importunity, the best way of resisting them is not to allow ourselves to be worried by them; for they cannot hurt us, although they can annoy us, provided that we are firmly resolved to serve God.

Despise, then, these little attacks, and do not so much as think of what they suggest, but let them buzz about your ears as much as they like, and fly here and there about you, just as we do with flies; and when they are about to sting you, and you see them settling on your heart, do nothing more than quite quietly drive them away, not fighting against

them, nor answering them, but performing acts contrary to them, whatever they may be, and especially acts of the love of God. For if you will believe me, you will not persist in wishing to oppose to the temptation which you feel the virtue which is contrary to it, because that would be, as it were, to have a mind to dispute with it; but after having performed an act of the contrary virtue, if you have had the leisure to recognize the quality of the temptation, you will turn your heart simply towards Jesus Christ crucified, and by an act of love of him, you will kiss his sacred feet. It is the best way to overcome the enemy both in small and great temptations, for the love of God, containing in itself all the perfections of all the virtues, and more excellently than the virtues themselves, is also a sovereign remedy against all vices; and your soul, accustoming herself in all temptations to resort to this general rendezvous, will not be obliged to consider and examine what temptations she has had; but on feeling herself troubled, she will without more ado seek calm in this great remedy, which is, moreover, so terrifying to the evil spirit, that, when he sees that these temptations stir us up to this divine love, he ceases to trouble us with them.

So much for the little and frequent temptations; and whosoever would occupy himself with them in detail would waste his time and accomplish nothing.

## CHAPTER X

### HOW WE MUST STRENGTHEN OUR HEARTS AGAINST TEMPTATIONS

CONSIDER from time to time what passions are predominant in your soul; and when you have discovered them, adopt a manner of life which is altogether contrary to them, in thoughts, in words and in deeds. For example, if you find yourself inclined to vanity,

think often of the misery of this human life; consider how troublesome these vanities will be to the conscience at the hour of death; how unworthy they are of a generous heart; that they are only the toys and amusements of little children, and such-like things. Often speak against vanity; and even though you seem to do so reluctantly, cease not to despise it, for by this means you will commit yourself, even in honour, to the opposite side; and by dint of speaking against a thing we come to hate it, even though in the beginning we had an affection to it. Do works that are mean and lowly as often as you can, even though you may seem to do them reluctantly; for by this means you will accustom yourself to humility and will weaken your vanity in such sort that, when temptation comes, your inclination will be unable to favour it so much, and you will have more strength to fight against it.

If you are inclined to covetousness, often think of the folly of this sin, which makes us the slaves of what was created only to serve us; reflect that at death we shall have to part with all our possessions, and leave them in the hands of someone who may squander them, or to whom they may be a source of ruin and damnation; and such-like thoughts. Speak much against covetousness, praise contempt of the world, force yourself often to give alms and to do works of charity, and sometimes to let slip opportunities of gain.

If you are inclined to give or receive love, often think how dangerous it is, both to yourself and to others; how unworthy a thing it is to profane the noblest affection of the soul, and to use it merely for the sake of diversion; how well it deserves the accusation of extreme frivolity of spirit. Often speak in praise of purity and simplicity of heart, and, as often as you can, suit your actions to your words, avoiding all that savours of affectation and flirtation.

Finally, in time of peace—that is to say, when

temptations to your besetting sin do not trouble you, make many acts of the contrary virtue, and should no occasions for such acts present themselves, seek to meet with them, for by this means you will strengthen your heart against future temptations.

## CHAPTER XI

### OF DISQUIETUDE

DISQUIETUDE is not a mere temptation, but a source from which and through which many temptations come. Sadness is no other thing than the sorrow of heart which we feel when we experience some ill which is contrary to our inclination, whether it be some exterior ill such as poverty, sickness, contempt, or some interior ill such as ignorance, dryness, repugnance, temptation. Therefore, when the soul experiences some ill, she is displeased thereat, and this is sadness; and forthwith she desires to be delivered from it, and to have the means to be rid of it; and so far she is right, for naturally everyone desires what is good and shuns what he conceives to be evil.

If the soul seeks means to be delivered from her ill for the love of God, she will seek them with patience, gentleness, humility and tranquillity, expecting to obtain her deliverance more from the goodness and providence of God than from her own labour, industry or diligence; if she seeks her deliverance from motives of self-love, she will be eager and heated in her search for means of deliverance, as if it depended more upon herself than upon God. I do not say that she thinks so, but I say that she acts eagerly as if she thought so.

And if she obtains not immediately what she desires, she falls into great disquietude and impatience, which, instead of removing the ill, only makes it worse, so that the soul is overwhelmed with

anguish and distress, and experiences so great a loss of courage and strength that her ill seems to her to be past remedy. You see, then, that sadness, which is right in the beginning, begets disquietude; and disquietude in its turn begets an increase of sadness which is extremely dangerous.

Disquietude is the greatest evil that can befall the soul, except sin; for just as seditions and internal troubles in a nation ruin it utterly, and prevent it from being able to resist a foreign invasion, so our heart, when troubled and disquieted, loses its power of maintaining the virtues which it has acquired, and also the means of resisting the temptations of the enemy, who then makes every effort to fish, as they say, in troubled waters.

Disquietude arises from an immoderate desire to be delivered from the ill which we experience, or to obtain the good for which we hope; and yet there is nothing which so aggravates the ill, and so impedes the good, as disquietude and eagerness. Birds remain caught in the nets and snares because, when they find themselves entangled therein, they flutter and struggle wildly in order to escape; but by doing so, they always entangle themselves the more. Therefore, when you are very desirous of being delivered from some ill or of obtaining some good, above all things place your spirit in repose and tranquillity, compose your judgement and your will; and then, quite quietly and gently, pursue the object of your desire, taking in an orderly manner such means as may be suitable. And when I say "quite gently" I do not mean to say "negligently," but "without eagerness, trouble and disquietude"; otherwise, instead of obtaining what you desire, you will spoil everything and entangle yourself the more.

*My soul is continually in my hands, O Lord, and I have not forgotten thy law,* said David.\* Examine more than once every day, but at least in the evening

\* Ps. cxviii 109.



and in the morning, whether your soul is in your hands, or whether some passion or disquietude has robbed you of it at all; consider whether you have your heart under your control, or whether it has escaped at all out of your hands, to entangle itself in some inordinate affection of love, of hatred, of envy, of covetousness, of fear, of ennui, of joy. If it has wandered, above all things, go after it and bring it back quite gently to the presence of God, subjecting your affections and desires to the ruling and direction of his divine will. For, as those who fear to lose something that is precious to them hold it tightly in their hand, so, in imitation of this great King, we should always say: O my God, *my soul is at stake; and therefore I carry it always in my hands, and, in this way, I have not forgotten thy holy law.*

Do not allow your desires, however small and unimportant they may be, to disquiet you; for after the little desires, the greater and more important ones would find your heart more disposed to trouble and disorder. When you experience disquietude, recommend yourself to God, and resolve to do nothing of that to which your desire urges you, until the disquietude has entirely passed away, unless it be something that cannot be deferred, in which case you must, with a gentle and tranquil effort, control the course of your desire, restraining and moderating it as much as you can, and then you must do the thing, not according to your desire, but according to reason.

If you can, make known your disquietude to him who directs your soul, or at least to some faithful and devout friend, and be assured that you will at once find relief; for the communication of the sufferings of the heart has the same effect upon the soul as blood-letting has upon him that is in a continual fever—it is the remedy of remedies. Accordingly the King St Louis gave this advice to his son: “If thou hast any trouble in thy heart, tell it forthwith

to thy confessor or to some good person, and thus thou wilt be able to bear thy ill easily because of the strength which thou wilt gain thereby."

## CHAPTER XII

## OF SADNESS

*THE sorrow that is according to God, says St Paul,\* worketh penance steadfast unto salvation; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.* Sadness, then, may be good or evil according to the different effects which it produces in us. It is true that it produces more evil effects than good, for it only produces two good ones—to wit, mercy and repentance; and there are six bad ones—to wit, anxiety, sloth, indignation, jealousy, envy and impatience; which led the Wise Man to say:† *Sadness hath killed many, and there is no profit in it*, because, for two good streams which flow from the spring of sadness, there are six which are very evil.

The enemy takes advantage of sadness to tempt the good; for just as he strives to make the wicked rejoice in their sins, so he strives to make the good sorrowful in their good works; and as he cannot bring about what is evil but by making it seem pleasant, so he cannot turn us away from what is good but by making it seem unpleasant. The evil one is pleased with sadness and melancholy, because he is sad and melancholy himself, and will be so for all eternity; and therefore he wishes everyone to be like himself.

Evil sadness troubles the soul, leads it into disquietude, gives birth to inordinate fears, causes a distaste for prayer, dulls and oppresses the brain, deprives the soul of counsel, of resolution, of judgement and of courage, and weakens her energy: briefly it is like a hard winter which takes away all

\* 2 Cor. vii 10.

† Eccclus. xxx 25.

the beauty from the earth, and benumbs all living creatures; for it takes away all sweetness from the soul, and makes her almost paralysed and powerless in all her faculties.

If you should ever find yourself, Philothea, attacked by this evil sadness, make use of the following remedies: *If anyone is sad*, says St James,\* *let him pray*; prayer is a sovereign remedy, for it lifts up the soul to God, who is our only joy and consolation. But when you pray, make use of aspirations and words, whether interior or exterior, which tend to confidence in God and love of him, as: O God of mercy! O God most good! my loving Saviour! God of my heart! my joy, my hope, my dear Spouse, the well-beloved of my soul! and such-like.

Vigorously resist inclinations to sadness, and though it may seem to you that whatever you do in such a time is done coldly, sadly and half-heartedly, yet do not omit to do it; for the enemy, who tries to make us weary of good works by sadness, seeing that we do not fail to do them, and that when they are done with repugnance they are more meritorious, ceases to trouble us any longer.

Sing spiritual canticles, for the evil one has often been forced to desist from his efforts by this means; witness Saul, who was beset or possessed by an evil spirit, whose violence was repressed by music.

It is good to occupy oneself with exterior works and to vary them as much as possible, in order to divert the soul from what causes the sadness, to purify and warm the spirit, sadness being a passion of a cold and dry nature.

Perform some exterior acts of fervour, although without relish, embracing the crucifix, clasping it to the breast, kissing the feet and hands of the crucified one, lifting your eyes and your hands to heaven, lifting up your voice to God by words of love and confidence, such as these: *My Beloved to me, and*

\* Chap. v 13.

*I to him.\* A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me: he shall abide between my breasts.† My eyes have failed for thy word, O my God, saying: When wilt thou comfort me?‡ O Jesus, be to me a Jesus. Vive Jesus! and my soul shall live. Who shall separate me from the love§ of my God? and such-like.*

A moderate use of the discipline is good against sadness, because this voluntary exterior affliction obtains interior consolation; and the soul feeling pains that are without is diverted from those that are within. Holy Communion is excellent; for this heavenly bread strengthens the heart|| and rejoices the spirit.

Make known all the feelings, affections and suggestions that arise from your sadness to your director and confessor, humbly and faithfully; seek the company of spiritual persons, and be with them as much as you can during such times. And in conclusion, resign yourself into the hands of God, endeavouring to suffer this troublesome sadness patiently as a just punishment for your vain joys; and doubt not at all that God, after he has proved you, will deliver you from this ill.

## CHAPTER XIII

### OF SPIRITUAL AND SENSIBLE CONSOLATIONS, AND HOW WE SHOULD BEHAVE IN THEM

GOD continues the existence of this great world in a state of continual change; by which day passes into night, spring into summer, summer into autumn, autumn into winter, and winter into spring, and one day is never exactly like another: some days are cloudy, some rainy, some dry, some windy; and this variety gives a great beauty to the universe. It is the same with man, who, according to the saying

\* Cant. ii 16.

† Cant. i 12.

‡ Ps. cxviii 82.

§ Rom. viii 35.

|| Ps. ciii 15.

of the ancients, is an "epitome of the world"; for he is never in the same state, and his life upon this earth glides along like the waters, flowing and undulating in a perpetual diversity of movements, which sometimes lift him up by hope, sometimes depress him by fear, sometimes bend him to the right by consolation, sometimes to the left by affliction, and not one of his days, nor even one of his hours, is exactly like another.

This is a great warning to us: we must endeavour to maintain a continual and inviolable equanimity in the midst of so great a variety of occurrences, and though everything should turn and change all about us, we must remain immovable, having our eyes ever fixed on God, and ever tending and aspiring towards him. Let the ship take any course whatsoever, let it sail towards the west or the east, towards the south or the north, whatsoever wind may urge it; yet the needle of its compass will never point elsewhere than towards the pole-star. Let everything turn upside down, not only round about us, but even within us—that is to say, let our soul be sad or joyful, in sweetness or in bitterness, in peace or in turmoil, in light or in darkness, in temptation or in repose, in relish or in disrelish, in dryness or in consolation, let the sun scorch it, or let the dew refresh it, ah! yet the highest point of our heart, our superior will, which is our compass, must ever be fixed upon the love of God, our Creator and Saviour, our unique and sovereign good, and tend incessantly towards him. *Whether we live, or whether we die*, says the Apostle,\* *we are the Lord's*. *Who shall separate us from the love and charity of God?* No, nothing shall ever separate us from this love: neither *tribulation*, nor *distress*, nor *death*, nor *life*, nor *present sufferings*, nor fear of *future calamities*, nor the wiles of the evil spirits, nor the *height* of consolations, nor the *depth* of afflictions, nor tender

\* Rom. xiv 8.



feelings of devotion, nor dryness, *ought ever to separate us from this holy charity which is founded in Jesus Christ.\**

This inviolable resolution never to abandon God nor to forsake his sweet love serves as a counterpoise to our souls to keep them in holy equanimity, in the midst of the variety of occurrences which the conditions of this life bring to them. For as the bees, when surprised by the wind in the fields, lay hold of little stones that they may be able to keep their balance in the air, and not be so easily carried away by the storm, so our soul, having resolutely embraced the precious love of God, remains constant in the midst of the inconstancy and vicissitude of consolations and afflictions, temporal as well as spiritual, exterior as well as interior.

But besides this general doctrine we have need of some specific instructions.

1. I say, then, that devotion does not consist in the pleasure, sweetness, consolation and sensible tenderness of the heart, which provokes us to tears and sighs, and gives us a certain agreeable and pleasant satisfaction in some spiritual exercises. No, dear Philothea, this is not the same thing as devotion; for there are many souls who experience these feelings of tenderness and consolation, and yet are very addicted to sin, and in consequence have not any true love of God, much less any true devotion. Saul pursuing poor David to kill him, followed him to the desert of Engaddi, and entered all alone into a cave, in which David with his men lay hid; David, who on this occasion might have killed him a thousand times over, spared his life, and would not so much as cause him any fear; but, having let him go forth at his pleasure, called out to him afterwards to declare his innocence and to let him know that he had been at his mercy. And thereupon what did not Saul do to testify that his heart was softened

\* Rom. viii 35, 38, 39.

towards David? He called him his son, lifted up his voice and wept, praised him, admitted his goodness, prayed to God for him, foretold his future greatness and asked him to deal mercifully with his posterity. What greater gentleness and tenderness of heart could he have displayed? And nevertheless, for all that, he had not changed his heart, and ceased not to persecute David as cruelly as before.

So also there are some, who, when they consider the goodness of God and the passion of the Saviour, feel great tenderness of heart, which causes them to sigh, to weep, to pray and to give thanks with such feeling that one would imagine their hearts to be possessed with very great devotion. But when it comes to the test, it is found that, like the passing showers in a very hot summer, which falling in great drops upon the ground do not soak into it at all and only serve to produce mushrooms, so also these tears and feelings of tenderness, falling upon a vicious heart without penetrating it, are altogether useless: because for all that, these unhappy persons would not give up one single farthing of their ill-gotten goods, would not renounce any of their perverse affections, and would not put themselves to the least inconvenience for the service of the Saviour, for whom they have shed tears; so that the good movements which they have had are only mushrooms, which not only are not true devotion, but very often are great ruses of the enemy, who, occupying souls with these little consolations, causes them to remain content and satisfied therein, in order that they may no longer seek true and solid devotion, which consists in a constant, resolute, prompt and active will to do what we know to be pleasing to God.

A child will cry if he sees his mother bled with a lancet; but if at the same time his mother, for whom he has just been weeping, asks him for an apple or for some sugar-plums that he has in his hand, he will by no means part with them. Such

are our tender feelings of devotion for the most part: when we see the thrust of the lance which pierced the heart of Jesus Christ crucified, we weep tenderly. Alas ! Philothea, it is indeed right to weep over the dolorous passion and death of our Redeemer; but why, then, do we not give him the apple which we have in our hands and which he asks of us so earnestly—that is to say, our heart—the only apple of love which this dear Saviour requires of us ! Why do we not give up for his sake so many little affections, delectations, complacencies, which he wishes to pluck out of our hands, and cannot, because they are our sugar-plums, and we are more fond of them than desirous of his heavenly grace ? Ah ! such are the friendships of little children, tender, but feeble, capricious and fruitless. Devotion, then, does not consist in these tender feelings and affections, which sometimes proceed from a natural temperament, that is soft and susceptible to any impression which may be given to it; and sometimes from the enemy, who, to deceive us, stirs up our imagination to the emotion which produces such effects.

2. These feelings of tenderness and affectionate sweetness are nevertheless sometimes very good and profitable; for they stimulate the appetite of the soul, strengthen the spirit, and add to the promptitude of devotion a holy joy and cheerfulness, which makes our actions beautiful and agreeable, even externally. David refers to this relish which may be found in divine things, when he cries out : \* O Lord, *how sweet are thy words to my palate ! they are sweeter than honey to my mouth.* And certainly the least little consolation of devotion which we receive is worth more in every way than the most excellent recreations in the world. *The breasts and the milk*—that is to say, the breasts of the divine Spouse, *are better to the soul than the most costly wine*† of earthly pleasures : he that has tasted of them, esteems

\* Ps. cxviii 103.

† Cant. i 1.

all other consolations but gall and wormwood. And as those who have the herb *scythice* in their mouth receive from it so great a sweetness that they feel neither hunger nor thirst, so those to whom God has given this heavenly manna of interior sweetness and consolation, can neither desire nor receive earthly consolations, at all events in such a way as to relish them and to occupy their affections with them. They are little foretastes of the immortal delights which God gives to the souls that seek him; they are sugar-plums which he gives to his little children to attract them; they are cordial waters which he gives them to strengthen them, and they are also sometimes pledges of the eternal rewards. It is said that Alexander the Great, when sailing on the high seas, discovered Arabia Felix by the scent of the sweet odours wafted to him from it by the wind; and that thereupon he took courage himself and encouraged all his companions; so, whilst we are on this sea of mortal life, we often receive feelings of sweetness and delight, which without doubt give us a foretaste of that heavenly country to which we tend and aspire.

3. But, you will say to me, since there are sensible consolations which are good and come from God, and since there are also useless, dangerous, nay, even pernicious ones, which come either from nature or even from the enemy, how shall I be able to distinguish them, and to know the bad or useless ones from the good ones? It is a general doctrine, dearest Philothea, in regard to the affections and passions of our souls, that we are to *know them by their fruits*.<sup>\*</sup> Our hearts are trees, of which our affections and passions are branches, and their works or actions the fruits. That heart is good which has good affections, and those affections and passions are good which produce in us good effects and holy actions. If the feelings of sweetness, tenderness and

\* Matt. vii 16.

consolation make us more humble, patient, tractable, charitable and compassionate towards our neighbour, more zealous to mortify our concupiscences and evil inclinations, more steadfast in our exercises, more docile and submissive to those whom we are bound to obey, more simple in our lives, there can be no doubt that they come from God; but if these feelings of sweetness have sweetness only for ourselves, if they make us inquisitive, peevish, punctilious, impatient, stubborn, proud, presumptuous, hard towards our neighbour, and if, imagining that we are already little saints, we no longer wish to be subject to direction or to correction, there can be no doubt that they are false and pernicious consolations. *A good tree only bringeth forth good fruits.\**

4. When we receive such sweetness and consolation, we must act as follows: (1) We must humble ourselves profoundly before God. Let us be very careful never to say on account of these feelings of sweetness: Oh! how good I am! No, Philothea, they are good things which do not make us any better, for, as I have said, devotion does not consist in this. But let us say: Oh! *how good God is to them that hope in him, to the soul that seeketh him!*† He that has sugar in his mouth cannot say that his mouth is sweet, but only that the sugar is sweet; so also, though this spiritual sweetness is very good, and God who gives it is very good, it does not follow that he who receives it is good. (2) We must recognize that we are yet little children who have need of milk, and that these sugar-plums are given to us because our spirit is yet tender and delicate, and has need of baits and enticements that it may be attracted to the love of God. (3) But after that, as a general rule, we must receive these graces and favours humbly, and value them very highly, not so much because they are good in themselves, as because it is the hand of God which infuses them

\* Matt. vii 17.

† Lament. iii 25.



into our hearts; as a mother does, who, to please her child, puts sugar-plums into his mouth one after the other; for if the child had understanding, he would derive more pleasure from the sweetness of his mother's loving tenderness and caresses than from the sweetness of the sugar-plums. And thus, Philothea, it is much to have the feelings of sweetness, but it is the sweetest of all sweet things to consider that God, with his own loving and motherly hand, puts them into our mouth, into our heart, into our soul, into our mind. (4) When we have thus humbly received them, we must make use of them carefully according to the intention of him who gives them to us. Why does God give us these feelings of sweetness? In order to make us gentle towards others and loving towards himself. The mother gives the sugar-plums to the child, that he may kiss her: let us then kiss this Saviour who gives us so much sweetness. Now to kiss the Saviour is to obey him, to keep his commandments, to do his will, to follow his desires—in a word, to embrace him tenderly with obedience and fidelity. Therefore, when we have received some spiritual consolation, we must be particularly careful that day to do good and to humble ourselves. (5) Moreover, we must from time to time make acts of renunciation of such feelings of sweetness, tenderness and consolation, withdrawing our hearts from them and protesting that, although we accept them humbly and love them, because God sends them to us, and because they stir us up to love him, yet we seek not them, but God and his holy love: not the consolation but the Consoler; not the sweetness but the sweet Saviour; not the tenderness but him who is the joy of heaven and of earth; and in this sentiment we must dispose ourselves to remain steadfast in the holy love of God, even though we should never have any consolation throughout our lives, and to be ready to say as well on Mount Calvary as on Mount

Tabor: *O Lord, it is good for me to be*\* with thee, whether thou art upon the cross or in glory. (6) Finally, I warn you, that, if you should have such consolations, tenderness, tears and sweetness in extraordinary abundance, or if there should be anything extraordinary in them, you must confer faithfully with your director about them, in order to learn how to be moderate and how to behave yourself in regard to them, for it is written:† *Hast thou found honey? Eat what is sufficient for thee.*

## CHAPTER XIV

### OF SPIRITUAL DRYNESS AND BARRENNESS

You will act as I have just told you, dearest Philothea, when you have consolations; but this fine weather which is so pleasant will not last always, and it will happen that sometimes you will be so deprived and stripped of all feelings of devotion, that your soul will seem to you to be *a desert*, fruitless, barren land, in which there is neither *path* nor road to find God, nor any *water*‡ of grace to water it, because of the droughts, which, so it seems, will reduce it to a waste. Alas! the soul that is in this state does indeed deserve compassion, and especially when this ill is vehement! For then, in imitation of David, she feeds herself *with tears day and night, while*, by a thousand suggestions, the enemy in order to make her despair, mocks her, saying: Ah! miserable creature, *where is thy God?*§ By what road wilt thou be able to find him? Who will ever be able to restore thee to the joy of his holy grace?

What will you do in such a time, Philothea? Try to find out from whence the evil has come to you: for often we ourselves are the cause of our barrenness and dryness.

\* Matt. xvii 4.

† Ps. lxii 3.

‡ Prov. xxv 16.

§ Ps. xli 4.

1. As a mother refuses sugar to her child who is subject to worms, so God withdraws his consolations from us when we take some vain complacency in them and are subject to the worms of vanity: *It is good for me, O my God, that thou hast humbled me; yes, for before I was humbled, I offended\* thee.*

2. When we neglect to gather the sweetness and delights of the love of God when it is the time to do so, he takes them away from us in punishment of our sloth: the Israelite who did not gather the manna early in the morning could not do so after sunrise, for it was then all melted away.

3. We sometimes lie on a bed of satisfactions of the senses and perishable consolations, as did the sacred bride in the Canticle of Canticles: the Spouse of our souls knocks at the door of our hearts; he inspires us to resume our spiritual exercises; but we bargain with him, because we are unwilling to quit these vain amusements and to withdraw ourselves from these false contentments; and therefore he passes on and leaves us in our sluggishness; then, when we wish to seek him, we have much difficulty in finding him; and, indeed, we have richly deserved it, since we have been so faithless and disloyal to his love that we have refused to follow it, in order to follow that of the things of the world. Ah! if you still have some of the flour of Egypt, you will not have any of the manna from heaven. Bees hate all artificial smells; and the delights of the Holy Ghost are incompatible with the artificial delights of the world.

4. Duplicity and insincerity in the confessions and spiritual communications which we make to our director causes dryness and barrenness: for, since you lie to the Holy Ghost, it is not surprising that he should withhold his consolation from you; you will not be simple and sincere like a little child,

\* Ps. cxviii 71, 67.

and therefore you do not receive the sugar-plums of little children.

5. You have sated yourself with worldly contentments, and it is not surprising if spiritual delights be not to your taste: doves already sated, says the ancient proverb, find cherries bitter. *He hath filled the hungry with good things*, says our Lady; *and the rich he hath sent empty away*:\* those who are rich in worldly pleasures are not capable of spiritual ones.

6. Have you carefully preserved the fruits of consolations already received? If so, you will receive fresh ones, for *to him that hath, more shall be given; and from him that hath not what has been given him, but has lost it by his fault, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him*†—that is to say, he will be deprived of the graces which had been prepared for him. It is true, rain revives plants which have some traces of greenness; but as to those which have none at all, it takes away from them even the life which they have not, for it makes them rot altogether.

For many such causes, we lose the consolations of devotion, and fall into dryness and barrenness of spirit: let us then examine our conscience and see if we can discover such defects in ourselves. But take note, Philothea, that we must not make this examination with disquietude and with too much curiosity; but if, after having faithfully considered our conduct in this respect, we find the cause of the evil in ourselves, we must thank God for the discovery; for an evil is half cured when one has discovered the cause of it. If, on the contrary, you see nothing in particular which seems to have caused this dryness, do not spend any more time over a more careful examination, but with all simplicity, and without any further examination into details, do what I am now going to tell you to do:

\* Luke i 53.

† Matt. xiii 12.

1. Humble yourself profoundly before God, in the consciousness of your nothingness and wretchedness: Alas ! what am I when I am left to myself ? Nothing else, O Saviour, but a dry land, which, cracked in all directions, testifies to the thirst which it has for the rain from heaven; and in the meanwhile the wind makes it waste and reduces it to dust.

2. Invoke God, and ask him for his joy: *Restore to me, O Lord, the joy of thy salvation.\* My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.†* Begone, O unfruitful *north wind* that driest up my soul; and come, O gracious *wind* of consolations, and blow through my garden,‡ and its good affections will shed abroad the odour of sweetness.

3. Go to your confessor; open your heart to him, enable him to see clearly all the recesses of your soul, follow the counsels which he gives you with great simplicity and humility; for God, who dearly loves obedience, often makes those counsels profitable which we take from others, and especially from directors of souls, even though they may not seem likely to be of much use, as he made the waters of the Jordan profitable to Naaman, which Eliseus, without any show of reason, had directed him to use.

4. But after all this, nothing is so useful, nothing so profitable in such dryness and barrenness, as to have no attachment to the desire of being delivered from it. I do not say that we may not entertain wishes for deliverance; but I do say that we must not set our hearts upon it, that we must resign ourselves to the mercy of the particular providence of God, so that he may make use of us, as long as it pleases him, in the midst of these thorns and among these deserts. At such times, then, let us say to God: *O Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me;* but let us add with great courage: *nevertheless, not my will but thine be done;§* and let us stop

\* Ps. l 14.

‡ Cant. iv 16.

† Matt. xxvi 39.

§ Luke xxii 42.



there with as much resignation as we can; for God, seeing us in this holy indifference, will console us with many graces and favours; as, when he saw Abraham resolved to deprive himself of his son Isaac, he was pleased to see him in this state of resignation and holy indifference, comforting him with a most consoling vision, and by very gracious blessings. Therefore, in every kind of affliction, whether corporal or spiritual, and in the withdrawals of sensible devotion which may happen to us, we must say with our whole heart and with an entire submission: *The Lord gave me consolations, and the Lord hath taken them away from me: blessed be his holy Name;*\* for if we persevere in this humility, he will restore to us his delightful favours, as he did to Job, who constantly used the like words throughout his state of desolation.

5. Finally, Philothea, in the midst of all our dryness and barrenness, let us not lose courage: but whilst awaiting patiently the return of consolations, let us always pursue the even tenor of our way; let us not omit any of our exercises of devotion, but rather, if it be possible, let us multiply our good works; and since we cannot present succulent comfits to our dear Spouse, let us give him dried ones, for it is all one to him, provided that the heart which offers them to him be perfectly steadfast in its will to love him. When it is a fine spring, the bees make more honey, and produce fewer young ones, because on account of the sunshine they are so busy gathering honey from the flowers, that they forget the production of their young ones; but if the spring be chill and cloudy, they produce more young ones and gather less honey, because, not being able to go forth to gather the honey, they occupy themselves with multiplying their progeny. It often happens, my Philothea, that the soul, finding herself in the fair springtime of spiritual consolations, is so absorbed

\* Job i 21.

in the enjoyment of them, that, because of the abundance of these sweet delights, she does much fewer good works; and that, on the contrary, in the midst of spiritual dryness and barrenness, the more she finds herself deprived of pleasant feelings of devotion, the more she multiplies solid good works, and abounds in the interior production of true virtues—of patience, humility, contempt of self, resignation, and abnegation of self-love.

It is, then, a great mistake on the part of many, and especially of women, to think that our service of God is less agreeable to his divine Majesty, when it is made without tenderness of heart and without feeling; since, on the contrary, our actions are like roses, which, though they have more external grace, when they are fresh, yet give forth a sweeter and stronger scent when they are dry: for just in the same way, though our works done with tenderness of heart are more agreeable to ourselves—to ourselves, I say, who only consider our own pleasure—yet, when they are done in a state of dryness and barrenness, they have a sweeter scent and greater value before God. Yes, dear Philothea, in times of dryness, our will carries us to the service of God as it were by main force, and consequently it must needs be more vigorous and constant than in times of consolation. It is no great thing to serve a prince in the quietness of a time of peace, and amidst the pleasures of the court, but to serve him in the hardships of war, amidst troubles and persecutions, is a true mark of constancy and fidelity. Blessed Angelo of Foligno says that “the prayer which is most acceptable to God is that which is made by force and constraint—that is to say, the prayer to which we apply ourselves, not from any attraction which we have for it, nor from any inclination of our own, but simply to please God, and to which our will carries us as it were by main force, overcoming and breaking down the dryness and repugnance which

we feel. I say the same of all kinds of good works; for the greater the contradiction, whether exterior or interior, that we experience in doing them, the more they are esteemed and prized in the sight of God. The less there is of self-interest in our pursuit of virtues, the more the purity of divine love shines forth therein; the child readily kisses his mother when she gives him sugar; but it is a sign that he loves her greatly if he kisses her after she has given him wormwood and aloes.

## CHAPTER XV

### CONFIRMATION AND ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID BY A NOTABLE EXAMPLE

BUT in order to make this teaching clearer, I am going to set down here an excellent passage from the Life of St Bernard, which I have found in the pages of a learned and judicious writer. He writes as follows:

It is an ordinary thing with almost all those who begin to serve God, and who as yet have no experience of the withdrawals of the grace of sensible devotion, or of spiritual vicissitudes, that, when they lose this feeling of sensible devotion, and this agreeable light which invites them to hasten along the way of God, they at once lose their breath and become faint-hearted and sad. Experienced persons give this explanation of it: that human nature cannot remain for any length of time in a state of hunger, and without delectation of some sort, whether heavenly or earthly. Now, just as souls that are lifted above themselves by tasting of higher pleasures easily renounce visible objects, so, when, by divine disposition, spiritual joy is withdrawn from them, finding themselves also deprived of bodily consolations, and not being yet accustomed to await in

patience the return of the true sun, they fancy themselves to be neither in heaven nor on earth, and to be enveloped in a darkness that will never come to an end: so that, like newly weaned children being deprived of the breasts of consolation, they languish and groan, and become wearisome and troublesome, especially to themselves.

This happened, during the journey in question, to one of the company named Geoffrey of Peronne, who had but recently given himself to the service of God. For he, finding himself on a sudden in a state of dryness, and being deprived of consolation and overwhelmed with interior darkness, began to think of his worldly friends, of his relatives, and of the riches which he had just forsaken: in consequence whereof he was assailed by so strong a temptation, that, not being able to hide it in his behaviour, one of his most intimate friends perceived it, and having tactfully accosted him with gentle words, said to him secretly: "What means this, Geoffrey? Why is it that, contrary to thy wont, thou art so pensive and sad?" Then Geoffrey, with a deep sigh, answered: "Ah! my brother, I shall never be joyful again." The other, moved to pity by these words, and being filled with brotherly zeal, went at once and told their common Father, St Bernard, who, perceiving the danger, entered a neighbouring church to pray to God for him; and Geoffrey, in the meanwhile, overcome by his sadness, laid his head upon a stone and fell asleep. But after a little while, both rose up: the one from his prayer with the grace which he had been praying for, and the other from his sleep with a face so smiling and serene that his dear friend, marvelling at so great and sudden a change, could not refrain from reproaching him gently for the answer which he had given him a short while before; then Geoffrey answered him: "If I told you a short while ago that I should never be joyful again, now I assure you that I shall never again be sad."

Such was the successful issue of the temptation of this devout person; but note, dear Philothea, in this story: (1) That God ordinarily gives a foretaste of heavenly delights to those who enter on his service, in order to withdraw them from earthly pleasures and encourage them in the pursuit of divine love, like a mother, who, to entice and allure her little child to the breast, puts honey upon the end of the teat. (2) That it is nevertheless this good God who sometimes, according to the wise disposition of his providence, takes away from us the milk and the honey of consolations, in order that, being thus weaned, we may learn to eat the bread, dry but more solid, of a vigorous devotion which is proved by being exercised in the midst of disrelish and temptations. (3) That sometimes very great storms arise in the midst of dryness and barrenness; and then we must steadfastly fight against temptations, for they are not from God; but we must patiently suffer the feelings of dryness, since God has ordained them for our probation. (4) That we must never lose courage in the midst of interior sufferings, nor say, like the good Geoffrey: "I shall never be joyful again," for in the night we must wait for the light; and, on the other hand, in the fairest spiritual weather that we can have, we must not say: I shall never be cast down: no, for as the Wise Man\* says, *in the day of good things be not unmindful of evils*. We must hope in the midst of trials, and fear in the midst of prosperity, and both in the one state and in the other we must always be humble. (5) That it is a sovereign remedy to disclose our ill to some spiritual friend who may be able to console us. Finally, for a conclusion of this admonition which is so necessary, I remark that, as in all things, so also in these, our good God and our enemy have contrary aims; for God wishes by these trials to lead us to a great purity of heart, to an entire renunciation of our own interest in what

\* Eccclus. xi 27.



concerns his service, and to a perfect stripping of ourselves; but the evil one strives by means of these troubles to make us lose courage, to make us return to sensual pleasures, and finally to make us wearisome to ourselves and to others, in order to decry and defame holy devotion. But if you carry out the instructions which I have given you, you will advance greatly in perfection, by practising virtue in the midst of these interior afflictions, about which I should like to say just one more word before concluding the subject.

Sometimes these feelings of disrelish, barrenness and dryness come from bodily indisposition: as when by excess in watching, in labouring and in fasting we find ourselves oppressed with weariness, with drowsiness, with heaviness, which, though they depend on the body, yet fail not to incommode the spirit, by reason of the intimate union which exists between them. Now, on such occasions, we must always remember to make several acts of virtue with the highest point of our spirit and superior will; for though our whole soul may seem to be asleep and to be oppressed with drowsiness and lassitude, yet the actions of our spirit cease not to be very pleasing to God; and we can say at such a time, with the sacred Spouse:\* *I sleep, but my heart watcheth*; and, as I have already said above, if there be less relish in working in this manner, there is, nevertheless more merit and virtue. But on such occasions the remedy is to reinvigorate the body by some kind of lawful rest and recreation: so St Francis ordered his religious to use such moderation in their labours as not to depress the fervour of the spirit.

And in regard to this glorious Father, he was once attacked and agitated by so profound a melancholy of spirit, that he could not conceal it in his behaviour; for if he wished to converse with his religious, he could not; if he withdrew from them, he was worse;

\* Cant. v 11.

abstinence and maceration of the flesh weighed him down, and prayer gave him no relief. He was two years in this state, so that he seemed to be altogether abandoned by God; but at last, after he had humbly endured this violent storm, the Saviour in a moment restored him to a happy tranquillity. This shows that the greatest servants of God are subject to these trials, and that the least ought not to be astonished if sometimes they happen to them.



FIFTH PART OF THE  
INTRODUCTION

CONTAINING EXERCISES AND  
COUNSELS FOR RENEWING THE  
SOUL AND CONFIRMING HER IN  
DEVOTION







## CHAPTER I

THAT WE MUST RENEW OUR GOOD RESOLUTIONS EVERY YEAR BY THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES

THE first point of these exercises consists in realizing their importance. Our human nature falls away easily from its good affections by reason of the frailty and evil inclinations of our flesh, which is a load upon the soul and is ever drawing her downwards, unless she often lift herself upwards by force of her resolves: just as birds fall straightway to the ground, unless they multiply the movements and strokes of their wings in order to maintain themselves in flight. For this reason, dear Philothea, you have need to reiterate and repeat very often the good resolutions that you have made to serve God, for fear lest, if you fail to do so, you fall into your former state, or rather into *a much worse state*;<sup>\*</sup> for spiritual falls have this characteristic, that they always cast us down to a lower state than that from which we mounted to devotion.

There is no clock, be it never so good, but must be wound up twice a day, in the morning and in the evening; and then, in addition to this, at least once a year it must be taken to pieces, in order that the rust which it has contracted may be removed, the strained parts readjusted, and those which are worn out repaired. So he that has a true care of his dear heart ought to wind it up daily to God in the morning and in the evening, by means of the exercises which I have noted above; and in addition to this, he ought

<sup>\*</sup> Luke xi 26.

many times to examine its state, rectify and readjust it; and finally, at least once a year, he ought to take it to pieces, and examine all its parts in detail, that is to say, all its affections and passions, in order to repair all the defects which may be found there. And as the clock-maker oils the wheels, the springs and all the movements of his clock with a delicate oil, so that they may work more smoothly and be less subject to rust, so the devout person, after having overhauled his heart in this way, in order to renew it well, ought to anoint it with the Sacraments of Confession and the holy Eucharist. This exercise will renew your strength impaired by time, will warm your heart, will make your good resolutions grow green again and the virtues of your soul blossom anew.

The ancient Christians used to practise this diligently on the anniversary of our Lord's baptism, on which, as St Gregory, Bishop of Nazianzum, says, they were wont to renew the professions and protestations which are made in this Sacrament: let us do the like, my dear Philothea, giving ourselves up to it very willingly and occupying ourselves with it very seriously.

Having, then, chosen a suitable time, according to the counsel of your spiritual Father, and withdrawing yourself a little more than usual into a solitude that is both spiritual and real, you will make two or three meditations on the following points, according to the method which I have given you in the Second Part.

## CHAPTER II

CONSIDERATION ON THE FAVOUR WHICH  
GOD SHOWS US IN CALLING US TO  
HIS HOLY SERVICE, ACCORDING TO THE  
PROTESTATION SET FORTH ABOVE\*

1. CONSIDER the points of your protestation. The first is, to have quitted, rejected, detested and renounced for ever all mortal sin; the second is, to have dedicated and consecrated your soul, your heart, your body, with all their powers, to the love and service of God; the third is, that if you should chance to fall into any evil action, you will rise again at once with the help of God's grace. Are not these beautiful, just, worthy and generous resolutions? Consider well in your soul, how holy, reasonable and desirable this protestation is.

2. Consider to whom you made this protestation for it was made to God. If reasonable promises made by us to men bind us strictly, how much more those that we have made to God: Ah! Lord, said David, *my heart hath said to thee;† my heart hath uttered this good word;‡ no, never will I forget it.*§

3. Consider in whose presence, for it was made in the sight of the whole court of heaven: ah! the holy Virgin, St Joseph, your good Angel, St Louis, all this blessed company beheld you and rejoiced over your words with signs of joy and approbation, and with eyes of unspeakable love saw your heart prostrate at the feet of the Saviour, consecrating itself to his service. There was special rejoicing over this in the heavenly Jerusalem; and now there will be a commemoration of it, if you renew your resolutions with a good heart.

4. Consider by what means you made your protestation. Ah! how sweet and gracious God was

\* Part I, Chap. 20.

‡ Ps. xlii 1.

† Ps. xxvi 16.

§ Ps. cxviii 16.

to you on that occasion ! Tell me truly, were you not drawn to it by the sweet attraction of the Holy Spirit ? Were not *the cords*, with which God drew your little barque to this safe haven, those of *love*\* and charity ? How tenderly he drew you with his divine sweetness, by the Sacraments, by reading, by prayer ! Ah ! dear Philothea, you were sleeping, and God was watching over you and thinking of your heart with *thoughts of peace*,† he was thinking thoughts of love towards you.

5. Consider at what time God drew you to these great resolutions, for it was in the flower of your age. Ah ! what a happiness it is to learn betimes what we cannot know but too late ! St Augustine, having been drawn at the age of thirty years, cried out : “ O thou Beauty, so ancient and withal so fresh, too late am I come to love thee.” Alas ! I saw thee, yet gave no thought to thee. And you may well say : O ancient sweetness, why have I not tasted thee sooner ? Alas ! you did not even deserve it then ; and therefore, acknowledging the great favour that God has shown you in drawing you in your youth, say with David:‡ *O my God, thou hast taught me and touched my heart from my youth, and I will declare thy mercy for ever.* If it had been in your old age, oh ! Philothea, what a grace, that, after you had misspent the preceding years, God should have called you before your death, and arrested the course of your misery at a time when, had it continued, you would have been eternally miserable.

6. Consider the effects of this call : you will find, I think, in yourself, changes for the good, if you compare what you are with what you were. Do you not consider it a boon to know how to converse with God by prayer, to have a wish to love him, to have calmed and tranquillized many of the passions which used to agitate you, to have avoided many sins and perplexities of conscience, and finally to have

\* Osee xi 4.

† Jer. xxix 11.

‡ Ps. lxx 17.

communicated so much more often than you would have done, uniting yourself to this sovereign source of eternal grace? Ah! how great are these favours! They must be weighed, my Philothea, with the weights of the sanctuary. It is the right hand of God that has done all this. *The right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength*, says David;\* *his right hand hath exalted me*. Ah! *I shall not die but live and shall declare with my heart, with my mouth and by my works, the wonders of his goodness*.

After all these considerations, which, as you perceive, furnish you with plenty of good affections, you must conclude quite simply with thanksgiving and with a prayer that is full of desire to draw much profit from it, and then retire with humility and great confidence in God, putting off the making of resolutions till after the second point of this exercise.

### CHAPTER III

#### OF THE EXAMINATION OF OUR SOUL CONCERNING HER ADVANCEMENT IN THE DEVOUT LIFE

THIS second point of the exercise is somewhat long; and I must tell you, that, in order to practise it, there is no need for you to make it all at one time, but at different times: as, for example, at one time taking what concerns your conduct in regard to God, at another time what concerns yourself, at another what concerns your neighbour, at another the consideration of your passions. It is neither requisite nor expedient that you should do it on your knees, except the beginning and the end which comprises the affections. As regards the other points of the examination, you can do them profitably whilst you are walking, and still more profitably in bed, if you can be there some little time without drowsiness and

\* Ps. cxvii 16, 17.



well awake; but in order to do this, you must have read them carefully beforehand. However, it is necessary to finish the whole of this second point in three days and two nights at most, taking some hour of each day and of each night, I mean some time, according as you may be able; for if this exercise were to be made at somewhat distant intervals of time, it would lose its force and make too feeble an impression. After each point of the examination you will note in what you find yourself to have failed, and in what you have some defect, and what principal irregularities you have noticed, so that you may declare them, in order to take counsel, make resolutions, and be strengthened in spirit. Although on the days when you make this exercise and the others it is not necessary to withdraw altogether from the company of others, yet you should do so a little, especially towards the evening, so that you may be able to retire to rest early and take the repose of body and spirit necessary to the consideration; and during the day you should make frequent aspirations to God, to our Lady, to the Angels, to the entire heavenly Jerusalem. And all this should be done with a heart enamoured of God and of the perfection of your soul.

Therefore, in order to commence this examination well: (1) Place yourself in the presence of God. (2) Invoke the Holy Spirit, asking him for light and clearness that you may be able to know yourself well, with St Augustine, who cried out to God in a spirit of humility: "O Lord, that I may know thee and that I may know myself"; and with St Francis, who asked God, saying: "Who art thou, and who am I?" Protest that you do not wish to note your progress in order to rejoice over it in yourself, but in order to rejoice over it in God; nor to glorify yourself for it, but to glorify God and thank him for it. (3) Protest that if, as you think, you seem to have made but little progress, or even to have lost

ground, you have no intention for all that of being cast down or of waxing cold by any sort of discouragement or pusillanimity, but that, on the contrary, you are resolved to stimulate and urge yourself to greater efforts, to humble yourself and remedy your defects with the help of God's grace.

That done, consider calmly and tranquilly how, up to the present, you have behaved yourself towards God, towards your neighbour and towards yourself.

## CHAPTER IV

### EXAMINATION OF THE STATE OF OUR SOUL TOWARDS GOD.

1. WHAT is the attitude of your heart towards mortal sin? Have you a firm purpose never to commit it, no matter what may happen? And has this resolution lasted from the time of your protestation until now? This resolution is the foundation of the spiritual life.

2. What is the attitude of your heart towards the commandments of God? Do you find them good, sweet, agreeable? Ah! my daughter, he that has his taste in good order and his stomach sound, loves good meats and rejects the bad.

3. What is the attitude of your heart towards venial sins? We cannot keep ourselves altogether free from them; but is there any venial sin to which you have a special inclination? And, what is worse, is there any for which you have affection and love?

4. What is the attitude of your heart towards spiritual exercises? Do you love them? Do you value them? Are they at all wearisome to you? Are they in any way distasteful to you? To which do you feel yourself less or more inclined? To hear the word of God, to read it, to discourse of it, to meditate, to aspire to God, to go to confession, to receive spiritual counsels, to prepare yourself for

Communion, to communicate, to restrain the affections—is there anything repugnant to your heart in all this? And if you find something to which your heart has less inclination, examine whence comes this distaste for it, and what is the cause of it.

5. What is the attitude of your heart towards God himself? Does your heart take pleasure in thinking of God? Does it feel any agreeable sweetness at the thought? Ah! says David,\* *I remembered God and was delighted*. Do you feel in your heart a certain facility in loving him, and a special relish in tasting of this love? Does your heart find any contentment in thinking of the immensity of God, of his goodness, of his sweetness? If the remembrance of God comes to you amidst the occupations of the world and its vanities, does it make a place for itself, does it take possession of your heart at all? Does it seem to you that your heart turns towards God, and in some measure goes to meet him? There are certainly souls like that. If a woman's husband returns home from afar, as soon as she is aware of his return and hears his voice, though she may be very busy and may be detained by some pressing occupation in the midst of her work, yet her heart is not detained, but quits all other thoughts to think of her husband who has returned. It is the same with souls that love God; though they may be very much occupied, yet, when the remembrance of God approaches them, they pay but little heed to anything else for the pleasure that they have in this dear remembrance; and this is a very good sign.

6. What is the attitude of your heart towards Jesus Christ, God and man? Do you take pleasure in him? Bees take pleasure in their honey, and wasps in putridness; so good souls find contentment in Jesus Christ, and are tender in their love of him; but the wicked delight in vanities.

7. What is the attitude of your heart towards our

\* Ps. lxxvi 4.

Lady, the Saints, your good Angel? Do you love them very much? Have you a special confidence in their patronage? Are their pictures, their lives, their praises pleasing to you?

8. As to your tongue, how do you speak of God? Are you pleased to speak well of him according to your condition of life and capability? Do you love to sing spiritual canticles?

9. As to works, consider whether you are sincerely desirous of promoting the exterior glory of God, and of doing something in his honour; for those who love God, *love, with God, the beauty of his house.*\*

Are you conscious of having forsaken any affection and of having renounced anything for the sake of God? For it is a true sign of love to deprive oneself of something for the sake of the person loved. What, then, have you hitherto forsaken for the love of God?

## CHAPTER V

### EXAMINATION OF THE STATE OF OUR SOUL IN REGARD TO OURSELVES

1. How do you love yourself? Do you love yourself at all excessively for the sake of this world? If so, you will desire to remain here always, and will be very solicitous to establish yourself on this earth; but if you love yourself for the sake of Heaven, you will desire, or at all events you will be ready to quit this earth whenever it shall please our Lord.

2. Do you keep a right order in the love of yourself? For it is only the inordinate love of self which ruins us. Now a well-ordered love demands that we should love the soul more than the body, that we should be more solicitous to acquire virtues than to acquire anything else, that we should set a greater value on heavenly honour than on that which is terrestrial and transitory. The well-ordered heart

\* Ps. xxv 8.

more often says within itself, "What will the Angels say if I think of such a thing?" than "What will men say?"

3. What love have you for your heart? Do you take any trouble to minister to it in its sicknesses? Alas! you owe it this care, to assist it and to procure assistance for it when its passions torment it, and to lay aside all else for that.

4. What do you esteem yourself before God? Nothing, doubtless. Now there is not much humility in a fly esteeming itself nothing in comparison with a mountain, nor in a drop of water thinking itself nothing in comparison with the sea, nor in a spark of fire considering itself nothing in comparison with the sun; but humility lies in not thinking ourselves more worthy of esteem than others, and in not wishing to be so esteemed by others. How do you stand in this respect?

5. As to the tongue, are you at all boastful in one way or another? Are you at all conceited in speaking of yourself?

6. As to works, do you indulge in any pleasures that are detrimental to your health? I mean vain and unprofitable pleasures; too many late nights without any good reason, and such-like things.

## CHAPTER VI

### EXAMINATION OF THE STATE OF OUR SOUL IN REGARD TO OUR NEIGHBOUR

A HUSBAND or a wife should be loved with a love that is sweet and tranquil, firm and steadfast, and this must hold the first place because God has ordained it and wills it. I say the same of children and near relatives, and also of friends, each in his proper place

But to speak in general, what is the attitude of your heart towards your neighbour? Do you love



him cordially and for the love of God? In order to discern this properly, think of certain persons who are troublesome and tedious; for it is in such cases that we practise the love of God towards our neighbour, and still more so when it is towards those who do us ill in deeds or in words. Examine carefully whether your heart be sincere in their regard and whether you experience much disinclination to love them.

Are you at all ready to speak ill of your neighbour, and especially of those who do not love you? Do you do anything injurious to your neighbour either directly or indirectly? If you reflect but a little, you will easily be able to discover it.

## CHAPTER VII

### EXAMINATION OF THE AFFECTIONS OF OUR SOUL

I HAVE spoken at great length of these points, in the examination of which lies the knowledge of the spiritual progress which we have made; for as to the examination of sins, that belongs to the confessions of those who are not solicitous of making progress.

Yet we must not set to work on each of these points otherwise than quite gently, considering in what state our heart has been in regard to them from the time when we made our resolution, and what notable faults we have committed in them. But to sum up the whole, we must reduce the examination to the scrutiny of our passions; and if it be troublesome to us to consider them so carefully in detail, as has been said, we can examine ourselves in this manner; what we have been and how we have behaved:

In our love of God, of our neighbour and of ourselves.

In our hatred of the sin which is in ourselves, and

of that which is in others; for we should desire the extirpation of the one and of the other.

In our desires, touching goods, touching pleasures, touching honours.

In our fear of the dangers of sinning, and in our fear of the loss of the goods of this world. We fear the latter too much and the former too little.

In our hope, which is perhaps too much set upon the world and upon creatures, and too little set upon God and upon eternal things.

In our sadness, if it be too excessive for vain things.

In our joy, if it be excessive, and for unworthy things.

In fine, what affections hold sway in our heart? What passions possess it? In what has it principally gone astray? For from the passions of the soul we may know its state, trying them one after the other: and, just as a lute-player, trying all the strings of his lute, tunes those which he finds out of tune, either tightening them or loosening them, so, after we have tried the love, the hate, the desire, the fear, the hope, the sadness and the joy of our soul, if we find them out of tune for the air that we wish to play, which is the glory of God, we may tune them by means of God's grace, and of the counsels of our spiritual Father.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AFFECTIONS WHICH WE MUST EXERCISE AFTER THIS EXAMINATION

AFTER having quietly examined each point of the examination, and seen in what state you are, you will proceed to the affections in this manner.

Thank God for what little amendment you have found in your life since your resolution, and acknowledge that it is due to his mercy alone which has wrought it in you and for you.

Humble yourself profoundly before God, acknowledging that if you have not made much progress, it has been your own fault, because you have not faithfully, courageously and constantly corresponded with the inspirations, lights and impulses which he has given you in prayer and at other times.

Promise to praise him for ever for the graces conferred upon you, in order to withdraw you from your evil inclinations and bring you to this amendment, even though it be small.

Ask him to forgive you for having shown such faithlessness and disloyalty in corresponding with his graces.

Offer him your heart that he may make himself entirely the master of it.

Implore him to make you wholly faithful to him.

Invoke the Saints, the holy Virgin, your Angel guardian, your patron Saint, St Joseph, and others in like manner.

## CHAPTER IX

### OF CONSIDERATIONS SUITABLE TO THE RENEWAL OF OUR GOOD PURPOSES

AFTER having made the examination, and conferred with some competent director about your defects and the remedies for them, you will take the following considerations, and make a meditation on one of them every day; spending therein your time of prayer, and always with the same method, as regards the preparation and the affections, which you made use of in the meditations of the First Part; placing yourself first of all in the presence of God, and imploring his grace to establish you firmly in his holy love and service.

## CHAPTER X

## FIRST CONSIDERATION: OF THE EXCELLENCE OF OUR SOULS

CONSIDER the nobility and the excellence of your soul, which has an understanding, that knows not only this visible world, but knows also that there are Angels and a Paradise; that there is a God most high, most good and ineffable; that there is an eternity; and knows too what is right and proper in order to live well in this world, associate with the Angels in Paradise, and enjoy God eternally.

Your soul has also a will altogether noble, which can love God and cannot hate him in himself. Consider how generous it is, and how, just as nothing that is corrupt can attract bees, for they alight only upon the flowers, so your heart can find no rest but in God alone, and no creature can satisfy it. Freely recall to mind the most cherished and the most absorbing diversions which have heretofore possessed your heart, and judge in truth whether they were not full of heavy disquietude, and of harassing thoughts and of irksome anxieties, in the midst of which your poor heart was miserable.

Alas ! our heart, when it runs after creatures, does so with eagerness, thinking to be able to satisfy its desires therein; but as soon as it has attained them, it sees that it must begin over again, and that nothing can content it, since God does not wish our heart to find a place of rest, any more than the dove which went forth from the ark of Noe, so that it may return to its God from whom it went forth. Ah ! how beautiful is our heart by nature ! Why, then, do we detain it against its inclination in the service of creatures ?

O my beautiful soul, you should say, thou canst know and love God; why dost thou occupy thyself with something less ? Thou canst aspire to eternity;

why art thou taken up with passing moments of time? It was one of the regrets of the prodigal son, that when he might have been faring delicately at the table of his father, he was feeding loathsomely at that of swine. O my soul, thou art capable of enjoying God, woe to thee if thou art contented with less than God! Lift your soul up on high by means of this consideration; show her that she is eternal and worthy of eternity; fill her with courage for this purpose.

## CHAPTER XI

### SECOND CONSIDERATION: OF THE EXCELLENCE OF THE VIRTUES

CONSIDER that only virtues and devotion can make your soul content in this world; see how beautiful they are. Compare the virtues with the vices which are contrary to them; what sweetness there is in patience compared with vengeance; in gentleness compared with anger and peevishness; in humility compared with pride and ambition; in liberality compared with avarice; in charity compared with envy; in sobriety compared with dissoluteness! The virtues have this admirable quality, that they delight the soul with an incomparable sweetness and pleasure after we have practised them, whilst the vices leave her utterly wearied and dissatisfied. Why, then, do we not endeavour to gain these delights?

In the case of the vices, he that has but a little of them is not contented, and he that has much of them is discontented; but in the case of the virtues, he that has but a little of them, has already some contentment, and, as he advances, ever gains more. O devout life, how beautiful, sweet, agreeable and pleasant thou art! Thou softenest tribulations and sweetenest consolations; without thee good is ill, and pleasures full of disquietude, troubles and



disappointments. Ah ! he that knows thee, may well say with the Samaritan woman :\* *Domine, da mihi hanc aquam* (Lord, give me this water), an aspiration frequently used by Mother Teresa and St Catherine of Genoa, though for different purposes.

## CHAPTER XII

### THIRD CONSIDERATION: OF THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS

CONSIDER the example of Saints of every kind: what have they not done to love God and to show their devotion to him ? Look on these martyrs invincible in their resolutions: what torments have they not endured in order to keep them ? But above all, consider these beautiful women in the flower of their age, whiter than the lily in purity, redder than the rose in charity, who, some at the age of twelve, others of thirteen, fifteen, twenty and twenty-five years, have suffered a thousand kinds of martyrdom rather than renounce their resolutions, not only in the profession of their faith, but also in the profession of their devotion; some dying rather than forsake virginity, others rather than give up serving the afflicted, consoling the sorrowful and burying the dead. O God, what constancy has this frail sex displayed on the like occasions !

Consider so many holy confessors: with what fortitude have they despised the world ! How invincible have they been in their resolutions ! Nothing has been able to make them give them up; they have embraced them unreservedly and have kept them unflinching. My God, what does St Augustine say of his mother Monica ? With what steadfastness did she carry out her undertaking to serve God in her marriage and in her widowhood ! And does not St Jerome say the same of his dear daughter Paula ?

\* John iv 15.

And they did so in the midst of such great obstacles, and amid so great a variety of circumstances ! What is there that we may not do after the example of such excellent patrons ? They were what we are ; they did it for the same God, for the same virtues. Why should not we do as much in our condition of life, and according to our circumstances, for our cherished resolution and holy protestation ?

### CHAPTER XIII

#### FOURTH CONSIDERATION: OF THE LOVE THAT JESUS CHRIST BEARS US

CONSIDER the love with which Jesus Christ our Lord suffered so much in this world, and especially in the garden of Olives and on Mount Calvary: this love had you for its object, and by means of all those sufferings and labours obtained from God the Father good resolutions and protestations for your heart, and by this same means obtained also all that you have need of to maintain, nourish, strengthen and fulfil these resolutions. O resolution ! how precious thou art, being the child of such a mother as is the Passion of my Saviour ! Oh ! how my soul ought to cherish thee, since thou hast been so dear to my Jesus ! Alas ! O Saviour of my soul, thou didst die to win for me the grace to make my resolutions ; oh ! grant me the grace to die rather than lose them.

Bear in mind, Philothea, that it is certain that the heart of our dear Jesus saw yours from the tree of the Cross and loved it ; and by this love obtained for it all the good things that you have ever had or will ever have, and amongst others your resolutions. Yes, dear Philothea, we can all say with Jeremias : O Lord, before I had any being, thou didst behold me and call me by my name ; inasmuch as God in his goodness, and love, and mercy, truly prepared

all the general and particular means of our salvation, and in consequence our resolutions. Yes, without doubt; just as a woman with child prepares the cradle, the linen and the swaddling-clothes, and even a nurse for the child whom she hopes to bring forth, though it be not yet in the world, so our Lord, having his goodness pregnant with you, wishing to bring you forth to salvation and to make you his child, prepared upon the tree of the cross all that was needed for you: your spiritual cradle, your linen and swaddling-clothes, your nurse and all that was requisite for your happiness. These are all the means, all the attractions, all the graces by which he conducts your soul and wishes to lead it to its perfection.

Ah ! my God, how profoundly we should engrave this on our memory; is it possible that I have been loved, and so sweetly loved by my Saviour, that he has thought of me individually, and in all these little occurrences by which he has drawn me to him ? How much, then, ought we to love, cherish and make good use of it all for our profit ! This is very sweet: this loving heart of my God thought of Philothea, loved her and procured for her a thousand means of salvation, as though there had been no other soul in the world to think of, just as the sun shining on one part of the earth, shines on it no less than if it shone nowhere else and shone upon it alone; for just in the same way our Lord thought of and cared for all his dear children, in such a manner that he thought of each one of us, as though he had no thought at all for the rest. *He loved me*, says St Paul,\* *and delivered himself for me*; as if he said: for me alone, as though he had done nothing for the rest. This, Philothea, must be graven on your soul, in order that you may carefully cherish and nourish your resolution, which has been so precious to the heart of the Saviour.

\* Gal. ii 20.

## CHAPTER XIV

FIFTH CONSIDERATION: OF THE ETERNAL  
LOVE OF GOD FOR US

CONSIDER the eternal love which God has had for you; for already before our Lord Jesus Christ, as man, suffered on the cross for you, his divine Majesty foreknew you in his sovereign goodness and loved you infinitely. But, when did he begin to love you? When he began to be God. And when did he begin to be God? Never, for he has ever been God, without beginning and without end; and so he has always loved you from all eternity: and therefore he prepared for you the graces and favours which he has conferred upon you. He says it through the Prophet:\* *I have loved thee* (he speaks to you as though there were no one else) *with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee.* Therefore, amongst other things, he has thought of causing you to make your resolutions to serve him.

O God, what resolutions are these, that God has thought of, meditated and designed from all eternity! How dear and precious they should be to us! How much we should be prepared to suffer, rather than swerve from them one hairbreadth! No, not though the whole world were to perish; for the whole world together is not worth one soul, and a soul is worth nothing without our resolutions.

## CHAPTER XV

GENERAL AFFECTIONS ON THE PRECEDING  
CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSION OF  
THE EXERCISE

O DEAR resolutions, you are the beautiful tree of life which my God has planted with his hand in the midst of my heart, which my Saviour wishes to

\* Jer. xxxi 3.

water with his blood in order to enable it to bear fruit; I will undergo a thousand deaths rather than suffer any wind to uproot it. No, neither vanity, nor delights, nor riches, nor tribulations shall ever take away from me my purpose.

Ah ! Lord, thou hast planted it, and hast kept this beautiful tree in thy paternal bosom from all eternity for my garden. Alas ! how many souls there are who have not been favoured in this way ! And how, then, shall I ever be able to humble myself enough under thy mercy ?

O beautiful and holy resolutions, if I keep you, you will preserve me; if you live in my soul, my soul will live in you. Live, then, for ever, O resolutions, which are eternal in the mercy of my God; be and live eternally in me; never will I abandon you.

After these affections, you must make specific resolutions in regard to the means that are requisite for keeping these dear resolutions, and you must protest that you wish faithfully to make use of them: prayer, frequentation of the Sacraments, good works, the amendment of your faults discovered while doing the second point, the avoidance of occasions of sin, the following of the counsels given you in this respect.

This done, as it were, by a fresh taking of breath and renewal of strength, protest a thousand times that you will continue in your resolutions; and as though you were holding your heart, your soul and your will in your hands, dedicate them, consecrate them, sacrifice them and immolate them to God, protesting that you will never take them back again, but will leave them in the hands of his divine Majesty, to follow in all things his ordinances. Ask God to renew you wholly, to bless the renewal of your protestation, and to strengthen it; invoke the blessed Virgin, your Angel, St Louis and other Saints.

Go in this state of heartfelt emotion to the feet of your spiritual Father: accuse yourself of the principal



faults which you find that you have committed since your general confession, and receive absolution in the same manner as you did the first time; read the protestation before him and sign it; and, finally, go and unite your renovated heart to its Source and Saviour in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

## CHAPTER XVI

### OF THE SENTIMENTS WHICH WE MUST KEEP AFTER THIS EXERCISE

ON the day that you have made this renewal and on the following days you must often repeat with your heart and lips these burning words of St Paul, of St Augustine, of St Catherine of Genoa and others: No, I am no longer my own; whether I live or die, I belong to my Saviour; I have no longer any dominion over myself or mine: My *self* is Jesus; my *mine* is to be his; O world, thou art always thyself, and I have always been myself, but henceforth I will be myself no longer. No, we will be ourselves no longer; for we shall have our hearts changed, and the world which has deceived us so often will be deceived in us; for only perceiving our change but little by little, it will think that we are always Esaus, whereas we shall find ourselves to be Jacobs.

All these exercises must rest quietly in our hearts, and when we have finished our consideration and meditation, we must pass quite gently to our business and affairs, for fear lest the liquor of our resolutions be spilt by a sudden transition, for it must be allowed to soak into and penetrate every part of the soul; however, the whole must be done without straining either the mind or the body.

## CHAPTER XVII

REPLY TO TWO OBJECTIONS WHICH MAY BE  
MADE AGAINST THIS INTRODUCTION

THE world will tell you, my Philothea, that these exercises and these counsels are so numerous, that whosoever would practise them, will have no time for anything else. Indeed, dear Philothea, even if we did nothing else, we should certainly be doing enough, since we should be doing what we ought to do in this world. But do you not see the fallacy? If it were necessary to do all these exercises every day, they would indeed take up the whole of our time; but there is no need to do them except in due season, each one according as the occasion arises. How many civil laws there are in the Digest and in the Code, which must be observed! But that is understood to mean that each is to be observed when the occasion arises, and not that they are all to be put into practice every day. Moreover, David, a king whose time was much occupied with very difficult matters, used to practise many more exercises than those which I have set down for you. St Louis, a king who was admirable in war and peace, and who administered justice and managed his affairs with incomparable care, heard two Masses every day, said Vespers and Compline with his chaplain, made his meditation, visited the hospitals, confessed and took the discipline every Friday, often listened to sermons, often took part in spiritual conferences, and for all that he never lost any opportunity of working for the public good and attended most diligently to it; and his court was more splendid and more flourishing than it had ever been in the time of his predecessors. Therefore practise courageously these exercises according as I have traced them out for you, and God will give you sufficient leisure and strength to do all that you have to do; yes, though he should

have to make the sun stand still, as he did in the time of Josue. We always do enough, when God works with us.

The world will say that I presuppose almost throughout that my Philothea has the gift of mental prayer, and that, notwithstanding, everyone has it not; so that this *Introduction* will not be suitable for all. It is true, without doubt, that I have presupposed this, and it is also true that everyone has not the gift of mental prayer; but it is also true that almost everyone is able to have it, even the most dull-witted, provided that they have good directors, and that they be willing to strive to acquire it as much as it deserves. And if there be any who have not this gift at all (which I think can only happen very rarely) the wise spiritual Father will easily make them remedy this defect by the attention which he will teach them to have either in reading or in hearing read the same considerations which are set down in the meditations.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THREE FINAL AND PRINCIPAL COUNSELS FOR THIS INTRODUCTION

THE first day of every month renew the protestation, which is in the first part, after your meditation; and at all times protest that you wish to observe it, saying with David:\* No, *I will never forget thy justifications*, O my God: *for by them thou hast given me life*. And should you experience any disorder in your soul, take your protestation in your hand, and prostrate in a spirit of humility, read it out with your whole heart, and you will obtain much relief.

Openly profess that you wish to be devout; not "that you are devout," but "that you wish to be devout"; and be not ashamed of the ordinary and

\* Ps. cxviii 93.

necessary actions which lead us to the love of God. Boldly avow that you try to meditate, that you would rather die than sin mortally, that you wish to frequent the Sacraments and to follow the counsels of your director (though very often there is no need to name him, for many reasons). For this openness in confessing that we wish to serve God and that we are consecrated to his love with a special affection is very agreeable to his divine Majesty, who will not have us be ashamed of him or of his Cross; and, moreover, it cuts off many suggestions which the world would make to the contrary, and pledges us in honour to strive after what we profess. The philosophers used to proclaim themselves such, that they might be suffered to live like philosophers; and we should let it be known that we are desirous of devotion, that we may be suffered to live devoutly. And if anyone should say to you that one can live devoutly without the practice of these counsels and exercises, do not deny it; but reply graciously that your weakness is so great, that you have need of more help and assistance than others.

Finally, dearest Philothea, I conjure you by all that is holy in Heaven and on earth, by the Baptism which you have received, by the breasts which Jesus Christ sucked, by the heart of love with which he loved you, and by the bowels of that mercy in which you hope, continue and persevere in this blessed undertaking of the devout life. Our days pass away, death is at the door: "The trumpet," says St Gregory Nazianzen, "sounds the retreat; let everyone be ready, for the judgement is at hand." The mother of St Symphorian, when she saw him being led away to martyrdom, cried out after him: "My son, my son, remember eternal life; look up to Heaven and think on him who reigns there; your approaching end will soon terminate the brief course of this life." My Philothea, I say the same to you, look up to Heaven, and forsake it not for the earth; look down

to hell, and do not cast yourself therein for the sake of these fleeting moments; look upon Jesus Christ, do not deny him for the sake of the world; and should the labour of the devout life seem hard to you, sing with St Francis:

To them that seek for heavenly bliss,  
Labours and pains come not amiss.

*Vive Jesus*, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.











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